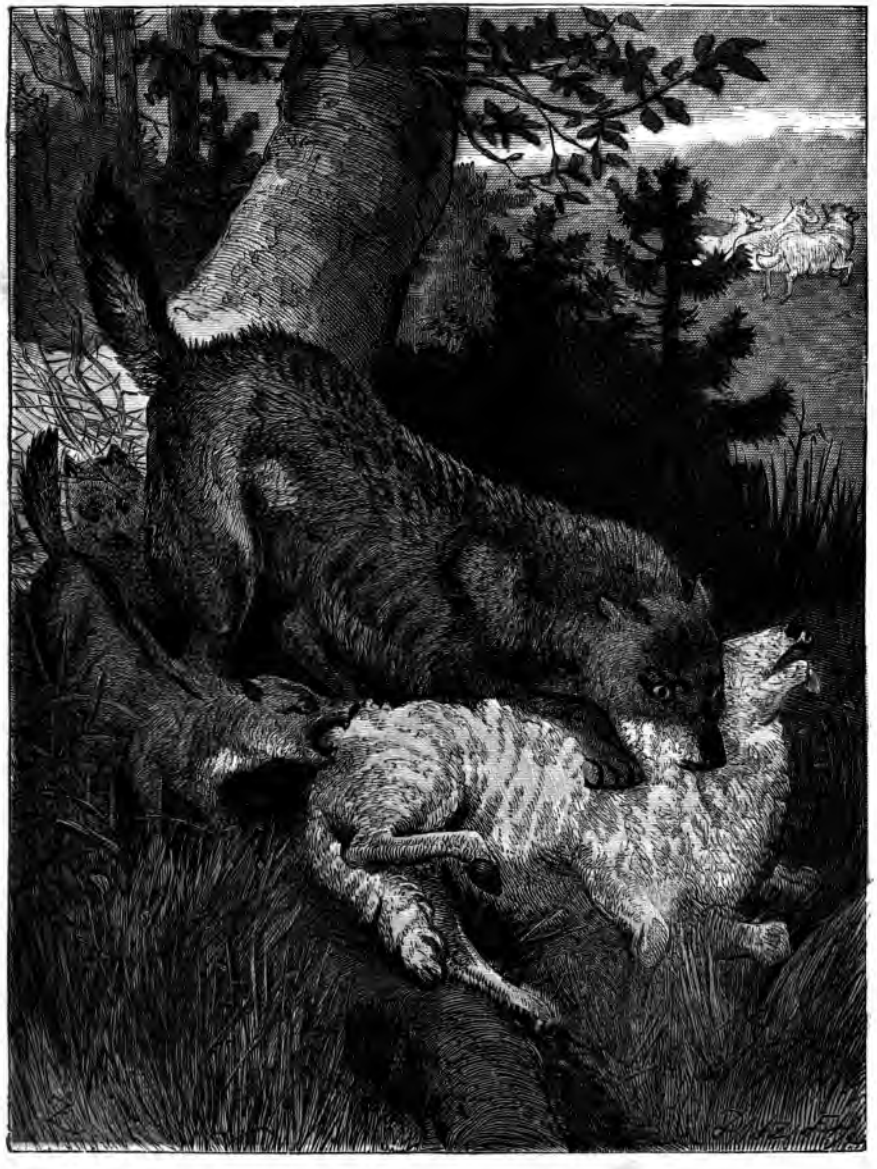
SOME OF MY FEATHERED AND FOURFOOTED FRIENDS



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SOME OF MY FEATHERED AND FOUR-FOOTED FRIENDS

BY

MRS. SALE BARKER

WITH TWENTY-FOUR FULL-PAGE PLATES BY J. B. ZWECKER, PRINTED IN COLOURS BY EDMUND EVANS

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CONTENTS.

WOLF AND SHEEP.

HICH of you little ones does not already hate the very name of wolf? Since the time dear Little Red-Riding-Hood started on her journey, so trim and pretty, with basket full of cakes and pats of butter, and in gay scarlet cloak, what child among you but has held the savage wolf in horror?

If the story of Little Red-Riding-Hood were true, that dreadful tragedy must have happened so long ago now, that it is not likely the savage wolf we look at in the picture can be the same that we are told of in that history. But it is very certain that even that wolf could not have been more terrible and cruel than this. See with what fury the creature fastens on the poor sheep's throat. The great eyes are glaring, and looking so wicked, so remorseless and greedy that one cannot help a shudder.

Shocking as the sight of the dreadful old wolf's fury and cruelty is, it is much worse, I think, to see the young one, with its vicious little jaws wide open, ready for a snap and a bite in its turn. It seems worse in the young one than the big one, because we always like to fancy—at least I know I do—that little young things, even little wolves, are gentle and tender; softer-hearted altogether than the large old creatures of the same species.

Leaving this particular wicked wolf, and her young ones, who are evidently so ready for the meal, to devour the poor sheep; and trusting that the rest of the flock will escape, as we can see they are trying to do with all their might, I will tell you, children, something about wolves in general.

There are several kinds of this animal, and each kind varies from the others in size and colour. The common wolf of Europe is generally grey, mixed with fawn, and sprinkled with black hairs. The under parts of the animal are almost white,changing to grey in the inside of the legs. There are no wolves, as I dare say you know, to be found in England now, except in the Zoological Gardens; but they are to be found in most other countries of Europe.

Wolves are very bold, and when hungry will not only attack timid, harmless sheep, but large wild animals; such as the buffalo, elk, wild horse, and even bears; and sometimes men. But they hunt in packs or herds, and this gives them advantage over animals much stronger than themselves.

Besides the European, or common, wolf, there is the black wolf of America, which is different rather in appearance, but is of the same savage, dangerous nature. And again, there is another smaller species of this animal, which is found in great numbers upon the American prairies, and for that reason has been named the Prairie Wolf.

These prairie wolves are the most savage and greedy animals in the world; they are found in great numbers upon

the American prairies. They are always hanging about on the outskirts of the herds of bison that roam about on the prairies, and they are most terrible enemies when a pack of them attack any larger animal, although each individual wolf is small and insignificant in himself.

These creatures are a dreadful worry and trouble to the hunters in their long journeys over the prairies; they hang behind during the day, though always following, and at night they creep up nearer. I know of an instance of two hunters shooting a large elk, and leaving it lying on the ground, as it was too heavy for them to carry. They returned to their tent to get knives and so forth, in order to cut it up, intending to carry the best of the meat back and cook it for supper. They were only a few minutes finding what they required, and were returning to their dead game, when one of them found he had forgotten something, and ran back to the tent again, the other proceeding on his way to the elk. When the first hunter reached the deer, he found *nothing* but the skeleton of the animal left, every atom of flesh had been devoured by the prairie wolves! and they were still savagely growlingand fighting amongst themselves over the bones.

When the second hunter came up he found his friend in dire peril; for the wolves—although they had feasted off the dead elk until they were swollen to double their natural size—attacked the first hunter when he appeared on the scene, and he was very nearly down, and at their mercy, when the second hunter came up; as it was, he was ex-

hausted with holding his own against them, and beating them off with his knives and the butt-end of his gun. He was bitten, too, though fortunately not badly. The second hunter had his gun loaded and fired into the midst of them, which scared them, and gave both the men time to reload, and then, after one or two wolves fell dead in the pack, the others took themselves off.

In India there are troops of Jackals, which resemble wolves in their manner of hunting in packs. As they scour the country they give vent to the most terrible wailing howls and cries. I don't know a more melancholy sound than the cry of the jackal. These animals are too cowardly to attack any large animal, as we sometimes hear of wolves doing; but, woe! to the wretched goat, or turkey, or any inhabitant of the poultry-yard if it should by any chance have been forgotten in the general lock-up at night in India.

I know a very sad thing that happened to a lady when she was in India. She had a lovely little skye-terrier, an immense pet, and the little creature used to sleep at the foot of her bed; one night the little fellow jumped off her bed and ran into the verandah, and from thence into the compound. His mistress had not missed him, and she was awakened by the hideous cry of a pack of jackals; she called the little dog, jumped out of bed, and, as it was a moonlight night, saw him plainly standing close to the house; before he could answer to her call, the frightful pack swept through the compound and the poor little dog was devoured!

STARLINGS.

IT is a pleasure to me to tell you about these handsome, clever birds. For the starling, with his graceful form, his glossy purple-black plumage speckled with white, and his yellow bill, is certainly one of the most beautiful birds common in England.

Starlings generally go about in large flocks; although in this pretty picture we see only papa and mamma starling, with two dear little children, feasting on someripe grapes.

Each flock seems to be under the command of one bird, or at least to obey the will of one mind. Quite a cloud of starlings may often be seen flying along at a great height, almost obscuring the sky where they pass; when suddenly the flock will become almost invisible, for every bird will have turned on its side, so as to present only the edge of its wings to the eyes of the people below. Then at some signal the whole body will separate into many divisions, each one wheeling about like a company of soldiers; afterwards, perhaps, to join again, and go on together to the intended feeding ground.

The nest of the starling is built of dry grass, and is generally placed in some old tower, in a wall, or hollow tree. This bird has a very curious voice, and it can not only be easily tamed, but taught to talk as well as any parrot.

Now I have given you a general account of the starling, I will tell you about one which belonged to me when I was a child.

I was very fond of pet birds; and on my birthday, when I was ten years old, mamma took me to a bird-shop, to give me a starling as a present. The woman of the shop showed us one, but named too high a price for it; and mamma was leaving the shop, when the woman said:

"You see, ma'am, the dear bird is almost like a child to me; I'm so attached to him, and he to me. I've had him since he was just out of the nest, and I've taught him all he knows; the pretty dear! that I have."

Suddenly the starling put his head on one side, looked wonderfully knowing, and in a strangely human voice cried out: "Don't believe it! don't believe it! don't believe it!" which he repeated in a very indignant tone of voice several times.

This remark was not complimentary to the woman, but my mother thought it such a proof of intelligence in the starling that she turned back, saying: "I think him well worth the money," and bought the bird at once.

The delight that bird was to me it is impossible to describe. He was loving beyond words, and would follow me about like a dog. He could not only talk very nicely, but he would perform all kinds of tricks; lie on his back in my hand, for instance, with shut-up eyes and crumpled claws, pretending he was dead; but at the magic threat of

"Policeman coming!" up Joe would jump with a very unmusical squeak, his bright eyes opened wide, and his head on one side. Then Joe used to get up games on his own account. For instance, he would manage to get out of his cage—he was a wonderfully clever hand at opening the cage door—and perhaps I would come into my room just returned from a walk: I would glance at Joe's cage and find the door open again, perhaps for the twentieth time since I had had him, and Joe gone.

"Joe! Joe!" I would cry. "Where are you?"

Then a curious sound would proceed from a corner of the room, and I would go and seek there, but no starling would I see; but I could hear, if I listened intently, the patter, patter of Joe's little feet as he hopped off to another part of the room—in fact, we would have a regular game at hide and seek, started by Master Joe. Sometimes I would be too quick for him, and find him; sometimes he would give himself up, and come flying at me with a loud "Hullo! hullo! and kiss and love me in his way, which was a very affectionate and demonstrative way, Ican tell you.

If I went for a walk Joe would go too, fly often to distant trees, but soon come back and perch upon my shoulder. Joe loved me, and I loved him very dearly; but much as I loved him, I did not care to share all my belongings with him, which is what he always seemed to consider his right. If I had a box of chocolates given to me I never had half, for Joe would manage to get at them, and when he tasted

them he never knew when to stop. Alas! poor Joe suffered for his large appetite, for after I had had him some little time he began to have fits!

One day he had escaped from his cage, and found his way into the kitchen, where the cook, who was very fond of him, winked at his stealing some pieces of raw meat. To my surprise Joe came from the kitchen with a sedate and somewhat sorrowful air, and instead of beginning any of his tricks and pranks, or fluttering up to love me, he hopped up to his cage, and sat on his perch with a downcast, and what, I at first thought, was a sulky air. But presently I discovered that my poor little Joe was ill. I directly feared that little Joe was going to have a fit: he had had three before, but not very severe ones, and my nurse had cleverly doctored him by giving him a hot bath, and hanging him before the fire in a flannel bag.

I went up to the cage door, and, putting my hand in, began to stroke my poor bird. Alas! Joe's eyes was dim, and he scarcely noticed my caresses.

"Joe! dear Joe!" I cried, "are you ill?"

Joe gave a feeble squeak, and fell off his perch! We picked him up, tried all the usual remedies, but they were of no avail. Joe remained in an insensible state for some hours, and then died a victim—alas! that I should have to say it of otherwise so dear and sweet a bird—a victim to gluttony!

DONKEYS.

HERE certainly are few things prettier to my mind than a dear little baby donkey. Every little young thing in the world has a great charm for me, but I particularly like baby donkeys. See what a pretty creature this is in the picture, with its innocent-looking little face, bright eyes, and sharp pricked-up ears, ready for a game with its sedate mamma, who is just enjoying her thistle.

I think you children generally like donkeys, although I am very, very sorry to say that when I have seen little people riding them at the seaside and elsewhere, I have almost always had cause to pity the poor gentle donkey.

If a donkey is taken care of and properly trained, and gently and kindly used, it will answer the bit, and obey the whip, as readily as a horse. I once had a donkey that I drove in a basket carriage, and it was as nice to drive as any pony.

I will tell you now how this little donkey became mine. I do not know if you children have ever heard the saying—but there is a saying—that nobody ever sees a dead donkey. My old nurse, I remember, used to say: "Pins and dead donkeys rolls off the earth together, I do believe."

Having had this idea instilled into me from my child-

hood, you may suppose I was very much astonished one morning, as I was walking along a lane close to where I lived in the country, to see a young donkey lying right in my path. I stooped down to look at it, and it appeared quite dead.

Just then a farmer belonging to the neighbouring farm came down the lane, and, stopping, he looked at the little thing also. "Well, ma'am," said he, "they say as no one ever see a dead donkey: here's one, sure enough." We could not see it breathe at all.

Presently up came a labouring man, who exclaimed: "Hullo! this is our little Tommy. I expect he's come from our place to look after his mother." Then I learnt that the poor little animal's mother had been sold to the farmer the day before, and so the little son had wandered off that morning in search of her.

"Poor little thing!" I cried, "I fear he is dead; do bring his mother to him." The farmer very good-naturedly went off to fetch Mrs. Donkey, who soon came trotting down the lane; and when she got by the side of Tommy, what do you think the little animal did?—Why he just jumped up, and seemed all right directly. Then it was so pretty to see how mamma donkey loved and caressed her little son; while he returned all her affection with interest.

The end of this little adventure was that I bought Tommy and his mother too, so that they might not be separated. The mamma used to carry my children on her back; and

little Tommy, when he grew older, was driven in my basket carriage for many years.

One day, a summer or two ago, I was driving in my sister-in-law's pony-carriage. I was staying with her at her pretty house in Kent, and one of my chief pleasures used to be taking delightful drives about the country with her in her pony-carriage. Such a pace we were going! Little Winnie, the sweetest, handsomest, fastest little pony in Kent, was trotting along bravely, on one of the few level roads to be found in the most lovely county in England, when suddenly she pricked her ears, sprang forward, and pulled so hard that it was very difficult to hold her.

"Listen!" said my sister-in-law, "there must be someone coming behind us. Winnie hears them, and she can't bear anything to pass her on the road!"

I listened, and heard a sharp, quick pattering of tiny feet behind us, with the roll of wheels; turning to look, I now saw that the sound was caused by a small cart—in which, however, were seated two men—drawn by a donkey! I am afraid you will think I am inventing—but I assure you I am not—when I tell you that this donkey-cart, laden with two heavy men, overtook *and passed* us, although little Winnie, indignant beyond anything at the affront, stepped out and did her best; and, once having the advantage of us, the donkey kept it, and we never made up our lost ground. One reason of this, of course, being that the donkey went as fast down hill as on the level ground, because donkeys

never stumble, therefore his master did not think of making him walk down the steep hills, while my sister-in-law's regard for her pony's pretty knees made her very careful lest she should have a fall.

"What a wonderful donkey!" I exclaimed; "I never saw anything like it before!"

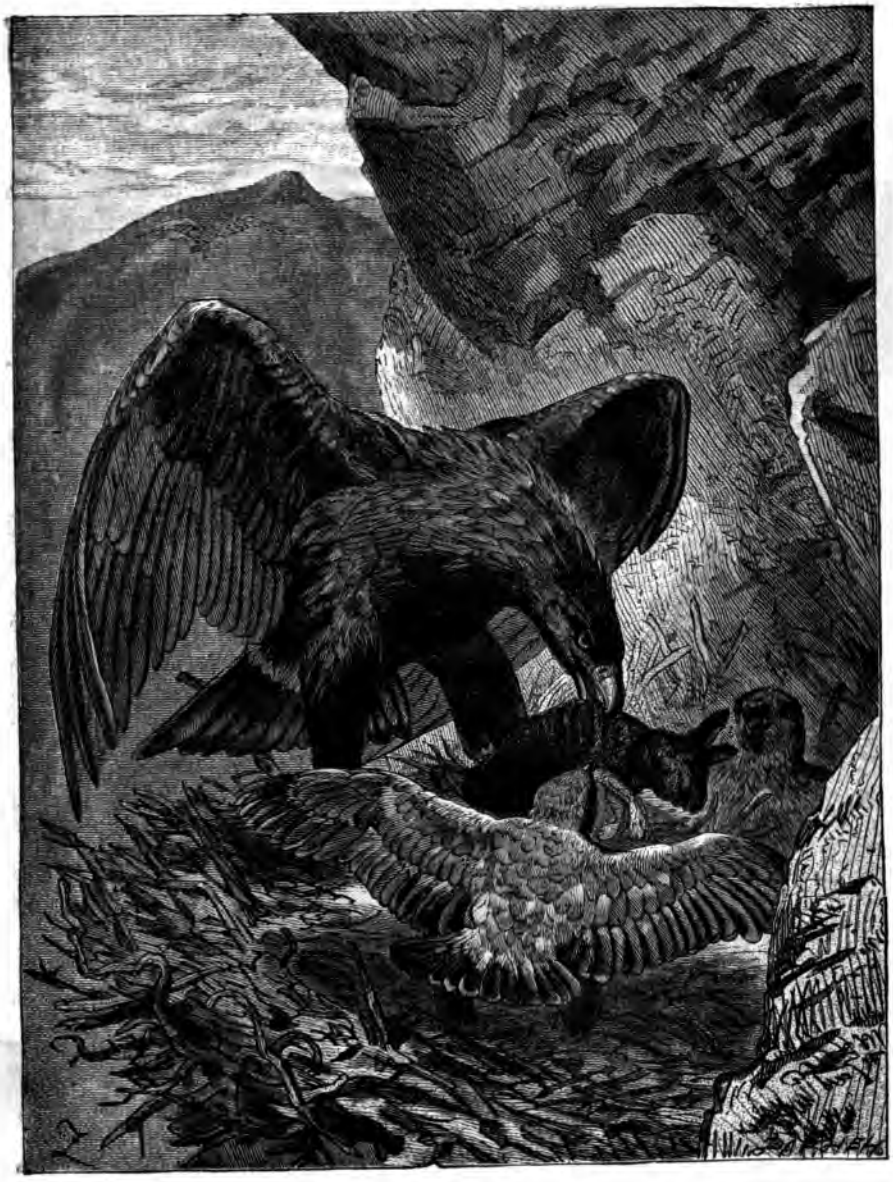
"Well," said my sister-in-law, "I have often seen this particular donkey; but I don't think there are many like him."

"Who does he belong to?" I then asked.

"To a builder in the neighbourhood," was her reply. "Would you like to go and see it at it's home? We will drive there one day if you like. He does not live very far off."

"Let us go to-morrow," I said, anxious to make the acquaintance of the wonderful donkey.

Accordingly, the next day we drove over to the builder's house and there saw not only the donkey that had passed us on the road—who, by-the-way, was about twenty years old—but a brother and sister of his, and a son and daughter; in fact, a whole family of most remarkable donkeys. They were all white or nearly white donkeys. They were clipped and singed regularly like horses, and fed with corn like horses; in fact, looked after, and made much of, and petted to a great extent. The consequence was, as I had seen, they were fleeter than a pony and more sure-footed, and a set of the most useful creatures possible, and as docile and gentle as they could be.



THE GOLDEN EAGLE.

HIS is a picture of an eagle feeding her young ones. You see the young eaglets have been waiting hungry at home in their nest, high up among the great, solemn rocks, while mother eagle has gone down into the plains below to find food for them. She has been successful, as you can see, for she has carried up in her cruel beak a poor hare. It is dead now, so there is no more pain for it.

Look how eagerly one of the young birds is flying at the dead hare, while the other has its beak wide open, ready for a bit. I think the last is the best mannered of the two, for the greedy eaglet with its back turned has evidently not waited to be asked to sit down and have its dinner, as well-behaved children should.

The eagle is called the king of birds from its noble look, its lofty flight, and its great strength. It has been known to carry up in its talons even a sheep. The golden eagle is found in many parts of the world; but only mountainous parts. It builds its nest high up on some lofty rock. It is much dreaded in places where it is common, for there are instances of its carrying off little children.

I have heard a story of an eagle who carried off a baby, which the mother had laid down for a minute by the sea-

shore, while she wandered to a little distance to pick up shells.

The poor woman saw the eagle fly off with her little child to its nest, which was not far away, and she followed it, climbing up over the rocks, faint and breathless, and almost dying with exertion and horror. As she approached the nest, she saw the little eaglets with open beaks ready for their meal. The poor mother had in her hand a shawl in which the baby had been wrapped, and she threw it past the old eagle over the steep rock. The great bird went swooping after it, just as she had hoped, thinking it fresh prey. On the instant she seized her baby, which was not much hurt, and carried it back over the rocks and safely home.

The nest of the eagle is made of branches of trees, interwoven with smaller twigs, and lined with rushes. It lays three eggs of a dusky colour, spotted with green; and it will attack anything or anybody in defence of its little ones. The golden eagle's eyes are particularly bright and piercing, and when perched it looks very grand and majestic.

There are more than forty different kinds of eagles. All these are quite unlike the vulture in their habits; the latter eat any dead things that they happen to find in their way, while the eagles, in their wild state, always kill their food. I have read that they are not cruel birds, for they never torture their prey, but swoop upon it with the quickness of lightning and kill it at one fell stroke of their deadly talons.

It appears that eagles never make use of their beaks to kill their prey.

If an eagle sees a bird flying and intends to kill it he does so by the mere stroke of his own body, if it is a large bird, striking it dead without inflicting any wound. Although eagles are very greedy, and eat a great deal usually, yet they can go without food for a long time. A friend of mine had a tame one, and told me that after it was caught it refused food for many days, and he feared that it would die of starvation; but after it became reconciled a little, it again took to eating very greedily.

This gentleman who had the tame eagle was a clergyman, and he was very fond of carving, and carved most beautifully. He had this eagle so that he might copy it, and carve an eagle in oak for the church lectern. I went to see the poor tame eagle, who was chained up to a tree, and I must say, though he looked very grand and handsome, that he did not impress me as being at all tame.

"I don't much like the look of your model," said I to my friend. "I certainly should not like to go near him."

"Oh! he's all right," was the reply. "Would you like to see me feed him?" Not realising what a very disagreeable sight it would be, I foolishly answered "Yes."

So my friend disappeared, and presently returned with a basket, and he went towards the eagle, who began a strange sort of dance of expectation.

"Ah!" said my friend, "you see he knows what's coming.

Hie, King Cole, look out; you shall have a splendid feed."

If King Cole knew what was coming it was more than I did, or I should most certainly have walked off in quite another direction.

When we got near the eagle my friend put the basket on the ground, and King Cole made many but futile attempts to reach it. However, the basket was opened at last, and then I discovered that it contained a quantity of raw meat.

"How horrible!" I said. "Are you going to feed him with that?"

"Why, you didn't think I was going to give him bun and biscuit?" was the reply. "He would not thank me for that, I can tell you."

And, so saying, he threw a large piece of the meat within the eagle's reach. Whereupon the eagle attacked it, and tore it up and eat it in such a horrible way that it made me feel quite sick, and I was very sorry that I said I should like to see him fed. You see we should always think well before we speak.

In spite of his eating in such a nasty way, the eagle made a very good model, I must tell you, and the carved lectern was soon finished, and greatly admired by everyone who saw it. I don't know what became of my friend King Cole, but I think he was given to the Zoological Gardens, where, amongst companions of like tastes, I fancy he would be much happier.

CATS.

ELL, my little friends, I think I need hardly describe *this* animal to you; for there is scarcely a home in England, rich or poor, which is without a pussy.

How the children all love the little kitten, the nursery pet, with its pretty playful ways and graceful movements! But kitty grows up too soon into the sedate old mother-cat, like the one we see in the picture holding the poor little mouse in her mouth. Ah! that to me is a terrible drawback to Pussy—that love of killing.

I am so fond of cats that this year I went to the Crystal Palace Cat Show, where I saw some beauties; among others a tortoiseshell Tom, which is said to be a great rarity. Hundreds of cats, large and small, long-haired and short-haired, long-tailed and tailless, cats of every colour known to catdom, filled the cages, which were arranged in long rows. And I must say they bore their imprisonment with wonderful patience. For three days they had been shut up in those wire houses, like birds: and some of the cages housed a whole family. One, I remember, contained a mamma and her six children; the latter small, but very rampageous. I pitied this poor mother with all my heart; how her patience must have been tried during those three dreadful days!

Though we may not like to see cats kill small animals, Puss is often valued in proportion as she can rid the house of rats and mice. So it is, I suspect, with the cat in the picture! She is evidently owned by a carpenter, who perhaps found his workshop infested by rats and mice till he possessed this handsome tabby. She will soon rid him of them, I think: and see how she is teaching her kittens to follow her example!

But in spite of their natural instinct to destroy mice and birds, cats may be easily taught to live in friendship with these very creatures; and I will tell you a story of a pet cat which, I think, will amuse you better than hearing about the poor little mice being killed.

A lady that I know had a fine tabby cat, and also a very beautiful canary. The cat's name was Bijou; the canary's —Cherry. Now Bijou had been brought up from kittenhood with Cherry; that is, he had been accustomed to sit on the rug beside the fire, while Cherry sang in his cage on the table, or hanging at the window. Bijou always behaved perfectly well, and never attempted to molest Cherry.

The mistress of these two pets used to let the canary fly about sometimes in her bedroom, but she never had quite confidence enough in Bijou to do this while he was there. One day in summer the window of the bedroom happened to be open at the top without her noticing it, and the canary, after flying about the room a little while, passed out

of the window. It flew round and about, from tree to tree, seeming to enjoy its liberty very much.

The lady feared she had lost it for ever, but she brought out the cage and placed it upon the lawn, thinking there was just a chance that the canary might come back to its old home of its own accord. As she stood at the window watching, she presently saw the bird alight on the lawn. A moment afterwards she saw Bijou, who had been crouching in a bed of flowers, spring out, pounce upon the little creature, and seize it in his mouth.

Then, to the lady's astonishment, who expected to see the bird devoured, Bijou trotted with it up to the cage, and deposited the truant safely inside again. Cherry was dreadfully frightened, but not at all hurt, and after shaking its rumpled feathers into their places, sat on its perch as happy as ever.

Is it not wonderful to see a cat jump—how graceful they are! And how lightly they fall, always, seemingly, upon their feet—indeed, there is a saying that cats *always* fall upon their feet. I wish it were so, but, alas! I know only too well to the contrary. I must tell you, I think, the reason why I am sure that the saying is a mistaken one, but in giving you my reasons I must tell you a very sad story, that makes me feel unhappy now when I think of it.

A lady that I know has a family of beautiful long-haired cats, and one day she made one of my children a present of a lovely little tabby kitten. I don't think I ever saw such a

little beauty. Fluff had unusually long hair, even for a Persian, and a tail like a squirrel's in size, while she had the proper featherlike long hairs growing out of each ear.

One summer evening, when we had had Fluff for about three weeks, and we had all been particularly admiring her as she had a game with our little pug Topsy, Blanchie carried her kitten up to her room at the top of the house, and left it there, and then went into the drawing-room. She took great pains to shut the window, for I had noticed a day or two before that Fluff was playing with the leaves of some flowers, the pots of which stood on the window sill, and I had said at the time, "When Fluff is alone here, be sure to have the window shut at the bottom, for the little creature might fall out, and although they say cats always fall on their feet, it would never do to risk it."

Blanchie shut the window, but the housemaid came into the room soon after, and, unfortunately, opened it again. A little time after this, when I was sitting in the dining-room, I heard a terrible sound, a thud and crash, and then the scream of a cat. I fancied that the cook had thrown some water at a strange cat, but one of the children who ran to the window screamed out, "Oh, mother! it is Blanchie's kitten!" The poor little thing, I suppose, in playing with the leaves, had overbalanced itself, and had fallen from the top of the house into the area below—an immense height!

I rushed down, but nothing could be done. You may suppose how heartbroken Blanchie was for a time!

THE SPARROW-HAWK.

HIS is a picture of a bird called the Sparrow-hawk. It is rather a small kind of hawk, and contents itself with swooping down upon poor little unoffending sparrows, and such small game. Like other birds of prey, it is becoming more scarce every year in England, and being a very wild, shy bird, it does not come near people or houses if it can help it. Still, when it is very hungry, or has little hungry bird-children at home in its nest, it becomes very brave and fierce, as you will see by the story I am going to tell you of what happened to me when I was a little girl.

It was, I remember, a cold morning. I had come out into the garden to bowl my hoop, when old Tidyman, the gardener, who was sweeping the paths, and who dearly loved a little chat, said to me,—

"It's rare and cold surely, Missie, for the time of year. The birds is eager for their food: there be a sparrer-hawk a'hoverin over here as seems precious hungry. It have a nesty, I know, in that there hollow tree in the park, and as soon as ever them pore little birds you see there trying to peck a bit, comes together, that there sparrer-hawk he comes after them. Looky there!" exclaimed the old man,

pointing to a hawk high in the air above our heads, "if he ain't a'hoverin over us now!"

The poor little dickies, who were pecking away at a few crumbs, which had been thrown out to them in the garden by some kind-hearted maid belonging to the house, seemed suddenly to become conscious of their danger, and flew off with a frightened, twittering cry. One only—a very young and very foolhardy little sparrow—remained to take a last peck. The hawk singled out this poor birdie for his prey, and allowing the others to fly away in peace, suddenly swooped down upon the little laggard, fastening his cruel beak in its poor quivering body.

This took place within half-a-dozen yards of the spot where old Tidyman and I stood talking. I was but a child of seven years old, but I hated cruelty, and always longed to help the weak against the strong; so I rushed at the hawk, hoopstick in hand. The little sparrow was already dead; but what do you think the savage hawk did? It turned upon me, and flew at my face. I put my hand up just in time, and had a piece pecked out of one of my fingers instead.

When Tidyman came up, the horrid bird flew off, not forgetting, though, to pick up and carry off the little dead sparrow in triumph. I have no doubt the baby-hawks, in their nest in the hollow tree, greeted him with open mouths, as you see them in the picture, and they were fed not only with the little dead sparrow, but also with a nice piece out of my poor little finger.

Not very long after this my father was out shooting, and he noticed in the distance a sparrow-hawk hovering over his prey; my father fired at the hawk, and hit him, but did not kill him. The bird came wheeling down and fell at some distance off. One of the gamekeepers ran to the place and would have finished the hawk if my father had not called out to him to wait.

When papa reached the wounded bird he found that the shot had broken one of his wings, but that he was not hurt otherwise. The hawk was put into a bag and carried home; when they got him home he made the keeper put him into an empty rabbit hutch, and we put him some water to drink and some scraps of meat. For several days the wounded hawk refused his food, but at last he consented to eat, and after a time became really tame. He would now eat out of our hands. We used to let him out of his hutch and he would walk about upon the lawn and pick up slugs, and even condescend to worms, like smaller birds.

At first all the little birds in the neighbourhood seemed inclined to desert our garden when they perceived our new, strange pet. After a little while, however, they discovered that he could not fly, so they advanced quite close to him, and would impudently fly round him just beyond his reach, chirping defiance at him. Our old gardener was sorry that the little birds had found out the maimed state of the poor sparrow-hawk, for he had rather counted upon him as acting as a sort of scarecrow when the fruit came.

Our sparrow-hawk lived for two or three years in this state of captivity and then he died. I dare say the confined life was trying to such a wild creature. He gradually refused his food, eating less and less every day, until at last the poor thing sank, and died from exhaustion.

I have read that the sparrow-hawk still inhabits England in great numbers, although it is not very often seen, as it is a most wild, shy, and wary bird, and never ventures near human beings, or their dwellings, if it can help it. Even to get within gun-shot of a sparrow-hawk is very difficult, though he may be taken unawares, as in the case I have been telling you of, if he is engaged in hovering over his prey, when his attention is entirely taken up with what he is about. Indeed he is so eager in the chase that all his faculties seem absorbed, and he seems to see and hear nothing but the unfortunate little bird he is pursuing.

This is a most courageous bird as well as being an extremely handsome one, and if he lived in the days of hawking he would be a most useful one to train, as he dashes at everything, and seems to be entirely without fear.

It is a bird, though, that is supposed to be impossible to tame, as it is viciously disposed, and has been found slow at learning and quick at forgetting. However, in the instance of which I have told you, when we managed to tame the wounded hawk, of course things were different, for the poor bird's broken wing helped to break his spirit, and it made him unnaturally docile.

SQUIRRELS.

HOW pretty little squirrels look perched on the branches of a tree! I like to watch them as they nimbly run up the trunk, or spring from bough to bough. One or two are generally to be seen in a clump of great old beeches near a house in the country, where I usually spend some happy weeks in summer; and I will tell you a story of a little squirrel whose acquaintance I made there last summer.

I happened to be up very early one morning, long before breakfast was ready, or any of the family were down, and I went out into the garden to enjoy the fresh sweet smell of the early day. The cows were grazing in the field beyond, and now and then lowing a friendly "good-morning" to each other. Some ducks were waddling in procession down to the pond, quacking out their wise remarks as they went. The little birds were singing lustily their welcome to the new-born day. Even the old watch-dog came yawning, stretching, blinking, and wagging his tail in kindly dog-fashion, to bid me "good-day" in the summer sunshine.

As I stood under the great beech trees, taking in with greedy eye and ear the sights and sounds of country life so refreshing to a Londoner, I heard something fall from one of the trees, then a scuffle, and immediately afterwards

a white Persian cat, belonging to the house, bounded towards me in hot pursuit of a dear little squirrel. I was just in time to save the poor little animal by stepping between it and the cat. The squirrel passed under the edge of my dress, and made off again up another tree; so pussy lost her prey.

Soon afterwards, when we were at breakfast, the butler told us that one of the little boys of the village, who had lost a pet squirrel, had asked if he might look for it in the garden of the house. It had first escaped into some trees in the park, and he had traced it from them into the garden. It at once occurred to me that this must be the little creature I had saved from the cat. I remembered how it made straight towards me, as if asking me for protection from its enemy, which only a tame squirrel would do; and I proposed, when breakfast was over, that we should go out and help in the search.

Little Jack Tompkins stood under the beech-trees, looking with tear-stained face up into the branches. Suddenly I saw his face brighten, and he called out: "I see un, ma'am; I see un! If so be no one warn't by, I be sure he'd come to I."

I need not say we retreated to a distance; then Jack called up the tree in a loud whisper, "Billee, Billee!" and in a minute down came the little creature on to his shoulder. I can tell you Jack was a happier child than he had been when he came into the garden. And when I told him what

a narrow escape "Billee" had had from the cat, he said: "It would be hard if a cat eat he, for our old puss brought he up with her own kits." Then he told us how the squirrel, when a tiny thing, had dropped out of its nest, and been found by him lying almost dead at the foot of a tree, and how he had carried it home, and tried whether pussy would adopt it as one of her own kittens. The cat was kind; the squirrel throve under her motherly care, and became Jack's pet and companion.

Now, children, in this instance it was all very well to keep a tame squirrel. "Billee" seemed happy, leading the life he was accustomed to: he had been fed and cared for by human beings from his infancy, and might be as incapable of finding food, and managing for himself, in a wild state, as a poor canary would be if let loose from its cage. But generally it is cruel to imprison little wild birds and animals who have known the enjoyment of liberty.

Squirrels are interesting little creatures. Besides being so pretty, bright-eyed, and active, they are remarkably intelligent. They make their nests in trees as birds do, but with even more ingenuity than most birds. The nest is waterproof, and secure from the roughest gale of wind; it is, besides, carefully hidden from the view of any passer-by beneath. The food of squirrels consists of vegetables, nuts, acorns, and other fruits and seeds. These little animals have the forethought to lay up provisions for the winter; and not only do they keep a little store in their

nests, but in any hole they may chance to find in the surrounding trees. Sometimes they have a dozen secret storehouses within a few leaps of their nest.

In India they have the prettiest little squirrels you can imagine. I once had a little pet one when I was there; I will tell you how I came to have it. In India the squirrels are not content with building in the trees, as they do in England, but build about in the rafters of the houses—and, in fact, in all sorts of odd nooks and corners, as you shall hear.

One day I thought I would be very industrious, and knit my baby some nice woollen socks, as the rainy season was coming on, and I looked about for some wool which I had brought out from England. I could not remember where I had put it, and looked first in one place, and then the other. At last I remembered a certain work-basket, that I had not opened for many weeks: it happened to be standing on a writing-table in the dining-room. I went to it; the lid was pushed to one side, and what do you think I found. Why, all my nice wool scraped up, and twisted and turned into a little squirrels' nest. There were three sweet little pretty baby squirrels lying together, but no mother was to be seen.

Whether it was my touching the basket or not that offended the mother I don't know, but that unfeeling parent deserted her children: two died, but I was able to save the third, and a dear little affectionate pet Master Jerry proved. I had him for about a year only, though, and he then fell a victim to a cat.

HERONS.

THIS picture shows three very funny long-legged birds; they look at first sight very like storks, but these birds are herons.

The heron, though much less common than in former days, still holds its place among familiar British birds, being occasionally seen on the banks of almost every river or lake. The heron lives on fish, which it swallows whole, and in great numbers. It mostly prefers to stand under the shadow of a tree, bush, or bank; and from its perfect stillness, and the sober colour of its plumage, it seems often to escape the observation even of the fish themselves.

In old times in England, the sport called hawking, which consisted in the chase of herons by hawks or falcons trained for the purpose, was a very favourite one among both gentlemen and ladies. Young hawks, procured from their nests in Iceland or Norway, and carefully trained, were of great value. The sport was generally enjoyed on horseback, and both ladies and gentlemen usually carried the hawks perched upon their wrists, the birds' heads being covered with a hood till the moment came for letting them fly.

When the heron was discovered, he would soon become aware of the approach of the hawking party; and spreading his broad wings, and stretching out his long neck in front

and his long legs behind, would rise majestically in the air. Then the hawk's hood was removed, and as soon as he caught sight of the heron, he was let fly in pursuit.

Now a hawk cannot strike unless it is above its prey, and the heron seems instinctively to be aware of this. It used to be thought a fine sight to see these two birds striving to rise each above the other. Round and round they went, always higher and higher. At length the hawk rose high enough to shoot down upon the heron. Sometimes he was received upon the long sharp bill of the latter, and simply spitted himself; but generally he would break the wing of the heron, or clutch him with beak and claws, when the two came fluttering down together.

This sport has now fallen into disuse, and English herons lead a peaceful life enough. There are some at the Zoological Gardens, and I think you will laugh to see them standing there at the edge of their pond, with heads sunk between their shoulders, looking like long-nosed old gentlemen in pointed tail-coats.

I have been told a funny story about a heron, though I will not be answerable for the truth of it. There was once upon a time an old and very rich gentleman, who was extremely fond of animals and birds of all kinds. This old gentleman had a regular private zoological gardens. He lived a good way off in the country, and had very large grounds, which were divided and arranged for the comfort of his pets of all sorts. He had aviaries for keeping small

birds, and a large sort of enclosure for big birds, of which latter he had a great number—amongst them being one or two herons.

Now, this old gentleman had several sons and daughters, all of whom were as fond of animals as their father, though I don't know if they cared as much for birds. One son I know had a colley that lived in the house, and was a very handsome and nice dog, and a great pet with everyone. Indeed, it was no use going to that house if you were not fond of dogs, for they met you at every turn, but "Beau"—that was the name of the colley—was the only really large dog allowed in the drawing-room.

Well, a certain old maid—a very precise old lady—came to stay with this family that I have been telling you about. She did not really like any animals, though she used to pretend to do so; and one evening, when Beau came up to her and put his great paws on her lap, and looked with a friendly look into her face with his gentle pretty brown eyes, she pushed him away, and said, "Oh, get down, you great rough creature," and gave him a little sharp kick that she thought nobody saw. The dog's master, however, remarked it all, and going up to her he said, "I thought you were so fond of animals, Miss Tomson; I have heard you say so to my father."

"Oh! yes," replied Miss Tomson. "I like *little* dogs, and I love all birds—sweet birds," she said, in an affected tone.

"Big ones?" asked the dog's master, "or only the little ones?"

"Oh! I love them all," she said. "They are so gentle, so much nicer than any other creatures to pet—don't *you* think so?" asked she of the master of the house. "I confess," she went on, "that I am a little afraid of large dogs sometimes, but I could never, never fear a bird." This she said because she knew the old gentleman was passionately fond of birds, and sometimes seemed to think there might be rather too many dogs about the place.

"You're sure you couldn't be afraid of a bird?" asked the dog's master again.

"Quite—quite sure," replied the old maid.

Now that night, when everyone had gone to bed, the master of the colley went into the gardens with his brother and a couple of the gardeners, and partly by coaxing, and partly by force, succeeded in inducing an old heron to accompany them to the house, and they managed to get it upstairs—how, I know not, but I tell the tale as it was told to me—and turned it into the old lady's bedroom. She was awakened by a noise in the room, and on opening her eyes discovered the heron standing at the foot of her bed gazing at her. In a minute more the most appalling screams resounded through the house, and the poor old maid was discovered almost in fits with fright.

She left the house next day, and never went there again, and I don't wonder at it—do you?

GOLDFINCHES.

HESE pretty lively little birds are Goldfinches; or, as they are sometimes called, Thistle-finches; because they are so fond of feeding on the downy seed of the thistle. On our moors or barren commons, where thistles abound, this beautiful little bird is always to be found. There are few prettier sights in the country than a cloud of goldfinches fluttering along a hedge, chasing the thistle-down as it is whirled away by the breeze, and singing their sweet merry song.

When I was a little girl I had a pet goldfinch given me, which knew all sorts of pretty tricks; and it was so tame and gentle! I called it Nugget, which, you know, means a little lump of gold. Now, shall I tell you what it was like? Its tiny body (goldfinches are very small) was all a bright reddish gold colour, while its wings and tail were marked with black and white, and its little bill was pale yellow.

Nugget seemed so happy in his cage, that it never occurred to me as a child that it might be cruel to shut up a little wild English bird in a prison, instead of letting it fly about free and gay over the breezy commons, and through the merry green woods. However, I fancy Nugget had really no regret for his native woods and wilds: I believe

he was taken from his nest when he was such a tiny bird that he could have no recollection of them.

When I opened the cage-door for my little friend to have a fly round the nursery, and stretch his wings, he would generally settle, after a moment—where do you think now? You would never guess—On my nurse's pincushion, just in front of the looking-glass. There the vain little creature would stay, quiet and happy, looking at his own reflection; pluming himself, and turning his head first to one side, then to the other, evidently admiring his own gorgeous plumage.

This was the great treat of the day for Nugget, but he was also very fond of taking his bath. Sometimes he had it on the dressing-table, and he would plunge into it, and splash the water about, making such a shower all about the place as you would scarcely believe could be made by such a diminutive being.

Nugget was very accomplished too, I can tell you. He used to draw up a little bucket of water, with a string, into his cage when he wanted to drink; and there was a little box with seed on the other side which he drew up in the same way. So you see he was a clever little bird as well as a very pretty one.

I suppose you, my little friends, think from what I have told you that you could not have a much nicer pet than a little goldfinch, and I quite agree with you. But now I must tell you a sad tale of a goldfinch. I have a little girl called

Lily, and, partly, I suppose, from hearing me tell her about the goldfinch I had when I was a child—she had a very great desire to have a goldfinch for a pet. I was anxious to have one quite young for her, because birds—as I daresay you know—will not become so tame unless you pet them and teach them tricks when they are quite baby ones.

At last, one day, a friend of ours called, and brought a sweet little goldfinch as a present for Lily.

"I am sure it is quite young," she said, "for my gardener got it for me, and he said that he took it out of the nest."

It was a lovely, healthy little bird, and *very* tame; in a few days it would come out of its cage and fly about the room, perching upon my head, and little Lily's hand, without the least fear. It reminded me so much of Nugget that if I had not been well aware that poor little Nugget had died of old age many, many years before, I should have been inclined to fancy it must be he. But, alas! I had attended little Nugget's funeral, as I remembered only too well, and had buried him, with much honour, under a rose-bush in the garden at home, while I was yet a child!

"Mamma," said Lily, "Goldy is so clever, that I should like to get a cage for him, like the one you had for your little bird, with a little waggon for his seed, you know, and a bucket for the water."

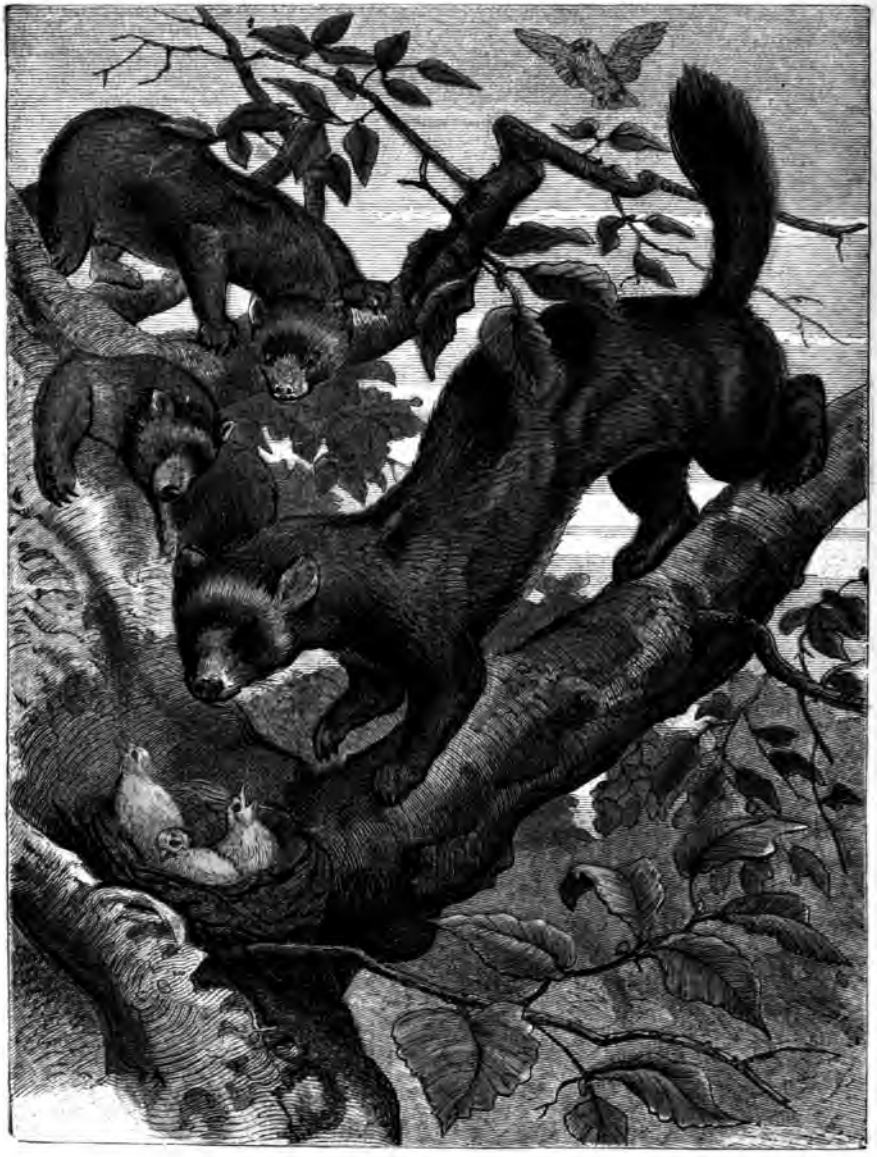
"I think it would give him a great deal of trouble, Lily," said I.

"Oh! but he is so clever, mamma!" cried Lily, and he

would learn to do it directly; and he is such a greedy little bird, that, do you know, I think it would be a good thing for him to have to draw his seed up in that way, because then he would not be so likely to eat too much."

In fact Lily's heart was set upon Master Goldy's working for his living, so she and I went off one day to buy a cage with a waggon and bucket. We soon found one, and bought it, and brought it home. Goldy was placed in it, and we taught him very quickly to draw up the seed and water. It was very funny to see him sometimes drag up his waggon of seed, quite close to his little beak, and then suddenly, by some awkwardness, let the string slip, when away would go the waggon to the bottom of the hill. He used to look surprised and disappointed, but he was a patient little bird, not easily daunted, and he would set to work again with a will, and generally succeed the next time, or, if he did not, his little mistress would come to his aid, and hold his food close for him to make a good meal.

Alas! one day Lily ran into my room in the greatest state of distress, "Mamma, mamma!" she cried, "something has happened to Goldy, oh! come and see, pray do." I followed her, and found that something indeed had happened to poor little Goldy. The sweet, bright little fellow was dead. In drawing up the waggon of seed he had somehow managed to twist the string round his little neck, and by the time Lily had found out that something was the matter, the poor little bird was hanged.



THE POLECAT.

AM going to tell you now, little people, about an animal which is neither very nice in appearance nor habits, and has become proverbial for its evil smell.

The picture on the other page is of a Polecat: there is a mother with her two little ones, and they have climbed into a tree to eat up the poor dear little birds you see in that nest. How frightened the poor little birdies are, as they see the glistening eyes and hungry jaws close over them, ready to snap them up!—not one pair of gleaming eyes and savage jaws, but three pairs: for the two children polecats are every bit as savage and dangerous as their mother.

How I wish I was a sportsman at the foot of that tree! My gun would soon be up at my shoulder, and—bang!—the charge would go into Mrs. Polecat. Then I would so pepper the whole polecat family, that they should soon turn round and beat a retreat, thankful to escape with their lives; and leaving the tiny birdies to wait happily in their warm comfortable nest until the papa and mamma birdies return.

Let us fancy that some kind sportsman has so saved the tiny fledglings; and now, having comforted ourselves with that thought, I will tell you some more about the nature and habits of the polecat. It belongs to the weasel tribe,

which are all remarkable for their long slender bodies, their great activity in climbing, and their power of squeezing themselves through small openings; also for their sharp teeth, their quickness of scent, and their singular rapacity. So savage is the polecat that it is a dreadful pest to the farmyard.

When engaged in hunting or robbing, it is wonderfully bold, and will put on a cool and impudent air, instead of running away at once, when discovered and disturbed.

Not only does it make victims of the smaller kinds of poultry, such as ducks and chickens; but, although a small animal itself, it will attack geese or turkeys. This terrible little creature has the habit of destroying the life of every animal it can get at, apparently only for the pleasure of doing so. For instance, if it can make its way into a hen-house, it will kill every cock and hen and little chicken to be found there, although it may be impossible for it to eat a twentieth part of its victims.

The Polecat has another name; it is also called the Fitchet.

It appears that there are a good many different kinds of these creatures. Buffon, the great writer upon natural history, whom I daresay you have heard of, has given the name of Mouffettes to the species, and that name is given to them because of their bad smell. The French name for the vapour which rises out of underground places, and which is so poisonous, is mouffette; and so these evil-

smelling animals are given that name by the great French naturalist.

A friend of Monsieur Buffon had an American polecat sent as a present to him—a disagreeable sort of present, I should say! It was about sixteen inches long, and had dark brown hair and sharp black claws, short legs, a pointed nose and small ears. It fed upon beetles, worms, and small birds. It would kill the chickens if it could find its way into the poultry-yard, but only eat their brains. It lived in the garden for a whole summer, where it was fastened up by a small chain. It never bit anybody; and when it was given food it allowed people to handle it just like a dog. It dug up the earth with its nose and forepaws, which had long crooked claws. During the day it hid itself in a kind of den it had made; but at night it came out and ran about as far as its chain would allow, and would keep up its exercise until morning. It had food given to it every night. It did not like meat or bread, but was very fond of boiled shrimps, caterpillars, and spiders. At the end of Autumn it was found dead in its hole.

Now I am very fond of all kinds of pets, dogs, cats and birds. Rats and mice, even, have had a share of my affection; but there are certainly *some* creatures for whom I could feel no liking, and polecats are amongst those creatures.

Ferrets, weasels, stoats and martens are animals of the same kind, with whom I have no sympathy: bloodthirsty

little savages all! They kill birds, hares and rabbits, and live by sucking the blood of all sorts of harmless creatures. Weasels are terrible enemies to the poor birds, for they think nothing of climbing trees, and will kill the old bird on its nest, and suck the eggs, or carry off the tiny birds.

I have a nephew who had some pet ferrets once, and he thought a great deal of them. He had hutches for them in the yard, and was extremely proud of them. I said, "Jack, I can't think how you can be so fond of your ferrets; they are nasty cruel things, and not even fond of or obedient to you."

"Oh!" cried Jack, "they are splendid creatures, Aunt Lucy. You should just see them after rabbits."

"That is exactly what I do *not* wish to see," said I; "but if you like to show them to me now that they are not actively engaged in any cruelty, I don't mind seeing them."

"Come along," said Jack, and along we went to the abode of the ferrets—nice wooden hutches, well lined with hay to keep them warm, for they are very chilly creatures.

Jack opened the hutch door, and took out the ferret that was his principal favourite. He put him against his breast, and caressed him as if he was a dear little puppy or pet kitten. "Isn't he tame?" said Jack. "See what a nice coat he has, and pretty pink eyes!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when Jack uttered a sharp and angry exclamation, and I saw that the horrid, treacherous ferret had bitten his hand most cruelly!

OWLS.

ERE we have a picture of Mrs. Owl feeding her little baby owls. Not a very nice feast, certainly, is it? You see she is bringing them a rat for supper; and yet they look very eager for it: the little beaks are all wide open, quite ready.

This owl, although of the kind called the barn-owl, has built her nest in a hollow tree in the wood. I daresay she thinks her children safer quite away from the farmer and his boys; but she goes into the farm-yard herself to kill a rat now and then, and brings it to her little family for supper, as you see.

These owls are not unwelcome guests to the farmers, for they clear the barns of rats and mice. Sometimes, however, they have been known to make the mistake of carrying off a young pigeon as well; but when Mr. Owl acquires this bad habit, he had better take care that the farmer does not catch him, or he will be nailed up against the barn-door as a warning to his relations.

I daresay you have never seen young owls. They are the softest, prettiest little white woolly pets you can imagine, with great eyes set in little round faces like a pussy-cat. The eyes of owls are so constructed that they can scarcely see in broad daylight, but when it is dark they

see quite well. Therefore you scarcely ever find an owl going about in the daytime; and if by any chance one does come out before evening, it goes blundering about, knocking itself against everything that comes in its way, till sometimes it will get a great blow on the head, and fall to the ground. Then, of course, if you don't mind the risk of a sharp bite, you can catch it.

I remember once a large white owl had got into a cow-house belonging to a house in the country where I was staying, and it remained there all night. When they went to open the door in the morning this great white creature flew out, but was so blinded by the strong sunlight of the summer morning that it was easily caught by throwing one of the fruit-tree nets over it. They managed to fasten it to the trunk of a tree, and it sat all day blinking away at the foot of the tree. But it was most horridly spiteful, and it pecked viciously at everything that came near it. We could not tame it, and at night it was allowed to fly off with a loud "toowhit toowhoo." We heard it for a good many nights afterwards.

I will now tell you of something that happened to some little children I know. It is a story about owls, so it will come in here very well. The names of these children were Paul and Mary: Paul was six years old, and Mary eight. They lived in a large old-fashioned country house, and they were both of them, to say the least of it, not remarkable for their courage. They did not like going up to bed alone,

and would not, either of them, be left alone without a light for all the world.

One day their mamma said to them, "Do you know, children, I think I shall change your schoolroom, as your Aunt Bella is coming to stay here this summer for a month, and I think I shall turn your schoolroom into a bed-room for her: it is such a nice cool room; and I shall give you as a schoolroom one of the rooms that we have not used lately on the other side of the house. It is larger, and will do beautifully. I have talked to Miss Portal, and she quite agrees with me."

The children looked rather blank, for they did not like the idea of going to what was considered the uninhabited side of the house, and both said "Oh! mother!" in a dismal tone of voice. However, their mamma laughed at them, and said, "My dears, you need not look so melancholy. Remember you will only be there during the day, and will sleep in your own little rooms opening out of mine, as usual; besides, if Miss Portal does not mind, I'm sure you need not."

In about a week the change was made, and the children took possession of the new schoolroom. The very first afternoon after they did so they came to their mother with very long faces. "We don't like the new schoolroom," they said. "There are odd noises in it."

"Noises! Nonsense!" said their mother.

"Yes, mamma, there are indeed," said the children. "Ask Miss Portal."

Miss Portal was asked, and acknowledged that there were noises to be heard in the schoolroom, but said, at the same time, that she did not mind them.

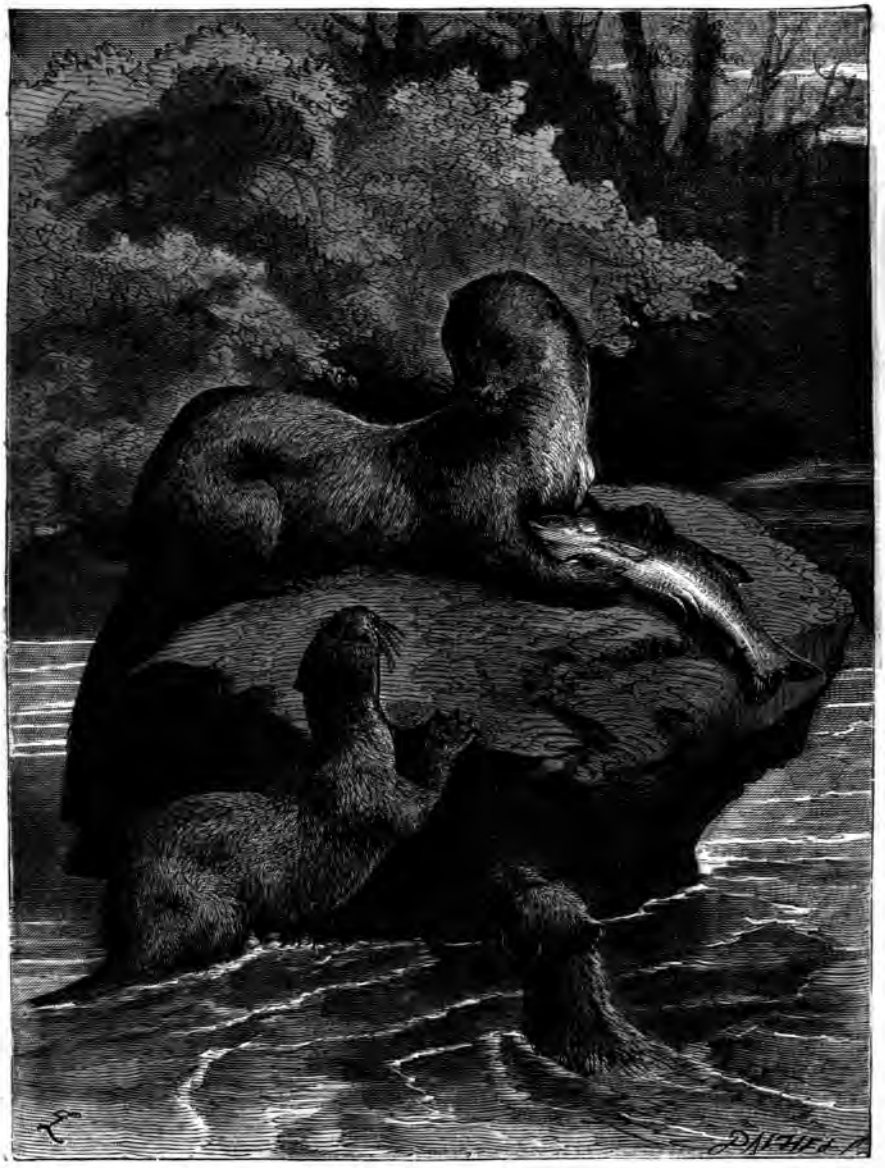
A day or two after this the children's mamma and aunt were sitting in the drawing-room by the open window, working and talking, when the door flew open, and Paul and Mary rushed in, white, and, for the moment, speechless.

"Mamma!" they cried at last in a breath, when they could manage to speak. "Such a *dreadful* noise in the chimney in the schoolroom!"

It then appeared that Miss Portal had left them in the schoolroom to learn their lessons, while she had gone to write letters in her own room, and they, hearing the mysterious noise in the chimney, had been scared out of their wits.

The chimney was very large—a regular old-fashioned chimney—and a stable-boy at once offered to climb up it, which he could easily do. Up he went, and came down with—what do you think? Two little baby owls! There had not been a fire in that chimney for years, so Mrs. Owl had fancied it a nice secure place for her to build her nest in, and she and her little family were the cause of the children's alarm.

Paul and Mary made great pets of the little owls, who grew up tame and gentle, but I never liked them on account of their love of eating raw meat and poor little mice.



OTTERS.

ERE, you see, we have a picture of some otters. I wonder if you little people have ever seen an otter. Perhaps you who live in London may have seen these creatures at the Zoological Gardens; or if your homes are in the country, you may have seen them on the banks of some stream.

They are curious animals: in the face, an otter very much resembles a seal, but there the likeness stops, for it has four legs instead of fins. It has a long body, with a broad long tail; it has very short legs, and is web-footed. The otter is beautiful and graceful in the water, and it is curious to watch how wonderfully it can dive, remaining a long time, and going a long distance, under water.

Although not large animals, they are so terribly destructive to fish as to be the objects of fierce hatred to owners of streams and to fishermen, who hunt them with dogs kept on purpose. In some places otter-hunting is considered excellent sport; but they are very difficult to catch, as you may suppose, from the way in which they dive. Just as the dogs are near him, the otter disappears suddenly from the surface, and when he comes up again to breathe, it may be a long way off and in quite an unexpected place.

They live upon fish, which have a great terror of them. An otter has been observed to circle round and round a shoal of small fish until they have been so frightened as to spring out of the water, and some of them on to the shore, from sheer fright. It is so dainty an animal that it will generally kill several fish to eat only the best parts. When it is engaged in eating the fish it has caught, it holds the slippery prey between its fore paws, as you see in the picture, and beginning at the shoulders, eats away the fleshy part till it gets near the tail; then it throws the rest away, leaving it on the banks for the rats or birds to eat.

There are instances of this animal being tamed and taught to catch fish and bring them home. Don't you think it would be nice to have a tame otter, and to teach him to fetch and carry as you walked by the river-side?—just to say, "Hie in, sir!"—and for him to plunge in and bring out a fine fat fish for dinner?

I remember when I was a child that my father had a game-keeper—a curious old man—who had a tame otter. Old Hammond lived in a pretty cottage on the borders of the lake, and his fishy-smelling favourite used to swim about in the lake, and catch fish for his master, just as I suggested to you.

Old Hammond was quite a character, and had many and many a tale to tell of hunting adventures. I begged Morgan, my dear nurse, to take me to see the old man, and to my joy one day Morgan said, "Well, Miss Lucy, you

shall come along with me down to Hammond's, and he'll give us a cup o' tea, and you shall see that there strange pet of his."

I was highly delighted, as you may suppose, and in a day or two, as mamma had no objection, Morgan and I wended our way through the wood to old Hammond's cottage. It was a lovely summer afternoon, and we enjoyed our walk thoroughly. Old Hammond, with whom Morgan was a great favourite, was sitting outside his cottage door in his little garden on the watch for us. On the arm of his chair sat one of the largest and finest black cats I ever saw; he was eighteen years old, but appeared as healthy and strong as any quite juvenile pussy. Then the old man had a splendid Gordon setter lying at his feet, and two or three terriers frisking about in the neighbourhood of the old gamekeeper's legs.

He welcomed us very kindly, and took us into his neat and pretty little cottage; for although Hammond was an old bachelor, he managed to live wonderfully comfortably. We had most delicious cakes, and home-made bread and broiled fish. Altogether, I don't think I ever enjoyed a tea more. Old Hammond entertained us with the most amusing anecdotes all the while. He was a very tall old man, with a bend in his knees, and a stoop in his shoulders, I remember; he had a great quantity of grey hair, and bright, blue eyes which twinkled whenever he talked.

He had some story to tell of each of his pets, but I was

most interested in and anxious to see the otter, for I had never seen one; however, I did not like to speak about it, as I was rather shy. Presently Morgan said to Hammond—"Well, Mr. Hammond, I'm sure it's very kind of you to tell us so much about animals, but me and my young lady is most anxious to see the otter. We hav'n't set eyes on him yet."

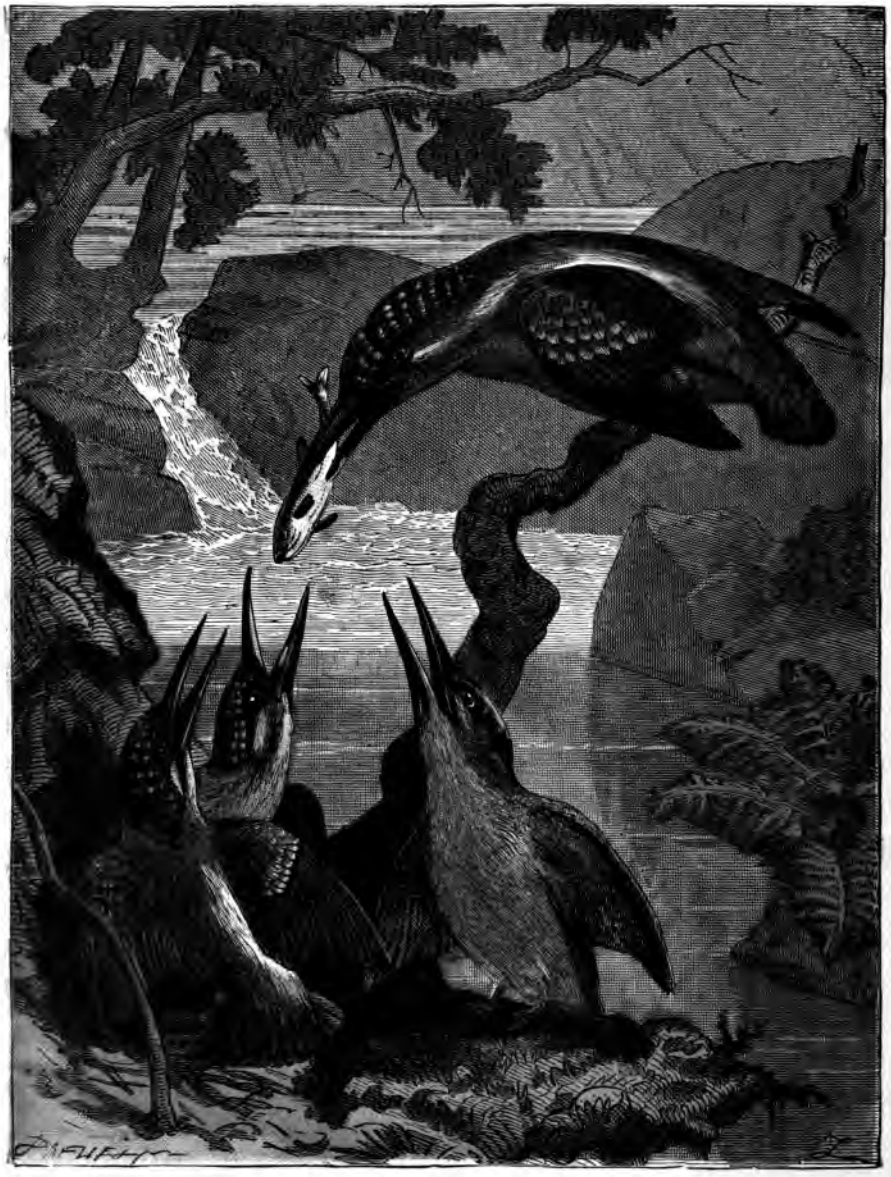
"Oh!" replied old Hammond, "he's out fishing. He caught this fish we're having for tea, and I bade him go fetch more. He'll bring me in one for my supper."

Here Morgan said, "I think it's mighty kind of the master to let your otter go a-fishing like that."

"He only fishes when I bids him. He is in capital training—as obedient as a dog," said old Hammond, standing up for his favourite. "*He* don't do no harm."

Just as he said that, I felt something touch my knees under the table, and putting my hand down I felt a cold wet nose. I gave a shriek, and old Hammond, stooping down, brought from under the table the very creature we had been talking about—the tame otter! And very tame he was, as gentle as the cat, and displayed immense affection for his master, who told us how he had taken him from his nest when he was quite a tiny little thing, and had brought him up with great tenderness and care.

Old Hammond showed us a fine trout the otter had brought in for supper. His name was Toby, and he answered to it just like a dog.



THE KINGFISHER.

N my last page I told my little friends about the gamekeeper's pet otter; now I am going to describe a pretty little bird.

The Kingfisher is an English bird; and I dare say those among you who live in the country, have often seen these birds sailing about through the air on a sunny day, or flitting over the surface of ponds, or of some river, on the look-out for small fish or water beetles. Sometimes you may see them glancing along with their bright green and gold wings, like a ray of light, under the shade of overhanging trees on the banks of some quiet stream. There are times, however, when they will remain quite still for hours, perched on a low branch or stone by the water side, watching for their prey. When the kingfisher catches a fish it beats it once or twice upon the ground to kill it; or sometimes it tosses the fish up into the air, catching it again in his beak, and then swallows it whole.

I was reading the other day an account of a kingfisher who was well punished for his greediness. He had caught a fish, which is called a bull-head or miller's-thumb, a large-headed fish, and when he tried to swallow it the head stuck in his throat; he could neither get it down nor up again, and so was choked. The kingfisher was found dead with

the fish, which was about as big as himself, sticking in that way in his throat. He must have been a very greedy bird; don't you think so?

The kingfisher is very pretty; its plumage is tinted with bright blue, green, and orange; but it has a harsh and ugly voice. It makes a nest in some hole near the water; and, as you see in the picture, when the mamma kingfisher has caught a fish, she calls her little ones to her from their nest in the hole, perches on a branch just above them, and feeds them with it.

Sometimes these funny, pretty little birds lay up a sort of storehouse of the fish they have caught. I was reading the other day of one that used to take all the fish too big for him to swallow at once, to his storehouse to keep. The place that this little miser kept his hoard in, was a crevice formed by the root of a tree, growing close to the water's edge. Sometimes he would have five or six fish hidden in this place, which was discovered by a human being, and one or two of the larger fish, evidently just caught, were carried off to be cooked and eaten. I wonder what the little miser thought when he got back to his storehouse? It was an unkind trick to serve him, but I think he deserved it.

Kingfishers are by no means timid birds, and take no pains to conceal their nests, even before their eggs are hatched: and when the baby birds make their appearance, they are so noisy, clamouring for food, with loud, angry

voices, that their home is very easily discovered. These birds often make journeys to the seaside in order to pick up young crabs, or shrimps, or sand hoppers, in fact they seem to be little creatures who think a great deal about eating.

I have heard that kingfishers are very fond of music, that is, if it is slow and solemn. I read that once upon a time there was an organ in a house, placed in a room looking towards a stream, where the kingfishers were in the habit of going, and it was observed, that, whenever the organ was played the kingfishers would directly make their appearance at the bottom of the garden, and remain, listening, as if quite delighted with the music. I told this story to a friend of mine, and as she was very fond of making pets of all kinds of birds, she determined to try and tame a kingfisher, and, do you know, she was successful, and this is how she did it.

She had no difficulty in finding a kingfisher's nest, and she boldly walked up to the hole in the bank, from whence she heard a great deal of chattering and quarrelling going on, and, thrusting in her hand, she took out a young baby kingfisher. She had some fish ready for him, and soon silenced all complaining by popping it into his little—or great, rather—wide-open beak. She took him home and put him in a basket with wool; he was quite fledged, and almost old enough to find food for himself, I must tell you—and she made her little brother go out fishing every day and bring home a good and fresh supply of food for her

little pet, and then, remembering this story of the kingfisher's love for slow music, she used to sit down to the piano and play away the most solemn airs she could think of.

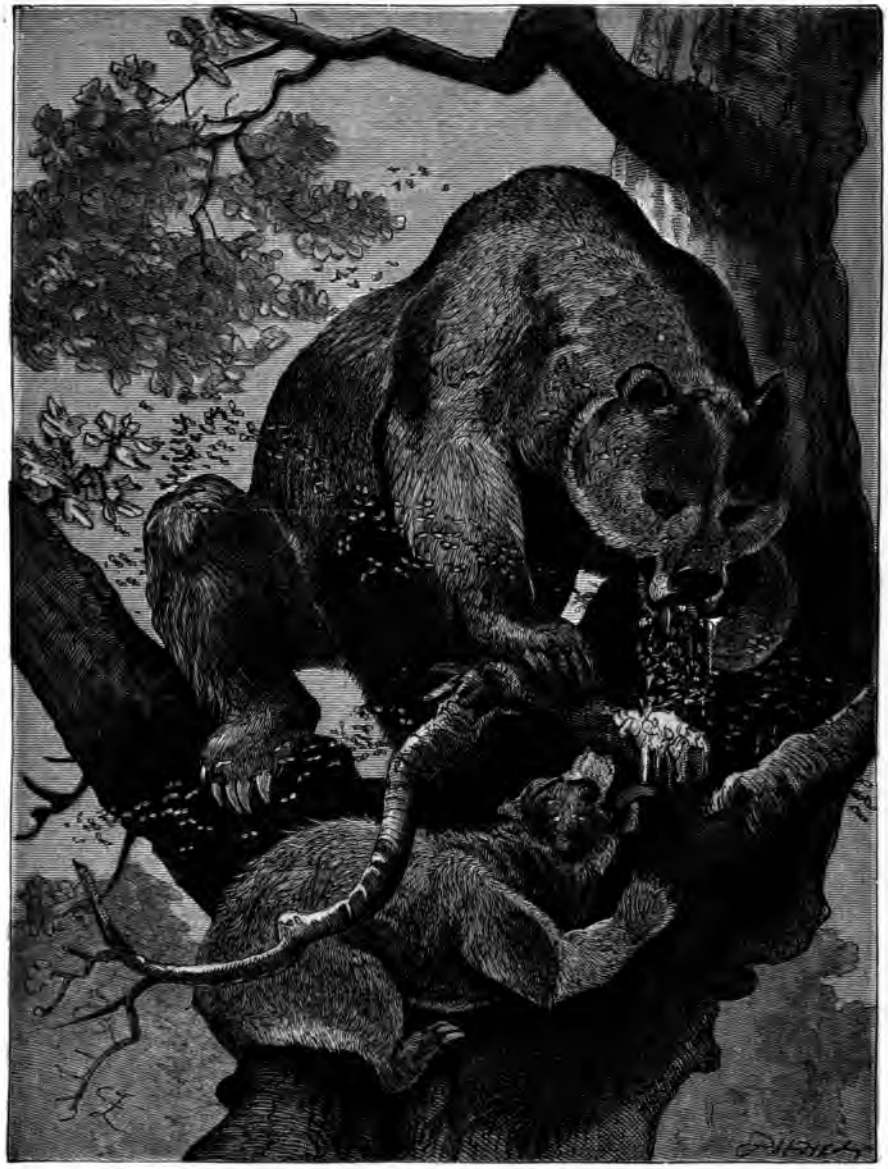
Master Kingfisher seemed quite to appreciate her attentions, took his food greedily from her hand, and would perch on the edge of his basket, with his head on one side, listening most intently to the mournful airs played for his particular satisfaction.

"I have tamed him!" exclaimed my friend with delight;

"Well," said her brother, "wait a bit and see."

She did wait a bit, and then one morning she got a wicker cage to put the little bird in, but she found that he moped and refused his fish that day, so the next she let him out to hop about, and let the door of the cage remain open so that he might perch and listen to the sad strains of music. The morning after that her kingfisher was gone: the window was opened for a moment, while his cage door was unfastened, and out flew Master Kingfisher, and never, never was he caught again. But my friend declared, that when she played soft and solemn airs upon the piano, a little kingfisher would fly to a branch of a tree near the window, and, with his little head on one side, would listen to her music, as her little pet bird had been in the habit of doing; therefore she declared it must be he.

For myself, I think it possible; but people very often have powerful imaginations upon such subjects.



BEARS.

ERE we have a picture, you see, of a large black bear and a little black bear, mother and daughter, I dare say. What are they about? They have actually climbed up a tree to find a beehive; for in North America, where there are great numbers of black bears, the wild bees have no straw hives made for them, but just have to make them for themselves up in the branches of the trees in the forest. When the poor bees have laid up a fine store of honey for themselves, it often happens that the black bears find it out, climb up the tree, and as we see in the picture, fall to, and very soon eat up all the honey. What thieves they are! Look at Mrs. Bear, how greedily she is devouring the delicious sweet honey, and see how the poor bees are swarming out of the hive, glad enough to escape with their lives. It is of no use that they try to sting the bear, and so revenge themselves upon her, for her coat is too shaggy, and her hide too thick, to be at all hurt by the stings of the angry bees. And there is naughty Miss Bear just following her mother's bad example, crouching with her mouth wide open under the hive, licking up the honey which drops from it and from the greedy old mother's mouth.

Black bears are found chiefly in North America, where

there are also what are called grizzly bears. But black bears are not only found in America; they are also found in Asia. When I was in India, some years ago, I often used to see small black bears about on the rocks near Bellary—the station where I was living; and I remember once looking on, from a distance, at a terrible fight between a black bear and a cheetah, or hunting leopard.

These two savage creatures, both, I imagine, very hungry, and seeking prey, were wandering about the great arid rocks which rise, pile upon pile, suddenly out of the plains in that part of India. As ill luck would have it, as far as they were concerned at least, the cheetah and black bear quite unexpectedly met each other face to face. Then began the most fearful growling and howling, and in a moment the fight had commenced. It was indeed horrible! but what surprised me was that the black bear got the best of it. The cheetah flew savagely, with open mouth and outstretched claws, at his antagonist, but the black bear stood, with arms extended, ready to squeeze his enemy in his deadly embrace. At last they both rolled over the rock together, and were dashed to pieces; but people who were better judges of the matter than I was, and who watched the battle with me, said that the black bear certainly had the best of it.

I can tell you another story of one of the black Indian bears. One day, when I was living in Bellary—which I don't think I told you was a station in the Madras Presi-

dency, about five hundred miles from the town of Madras—I was sitting in the verandah with my little girl, who was then about two years old; she was playing with her box of bricks, and I was reading. We were both very much taken up with our occupations, and we were equally surprised on looking up to see standing in the compound, under the great portico at the foot of the steps leading from the verandah, two natives, with very little clothing and no turbans, leading two black bears by ropes attached to rings in their noses.

I clapped my hands, whereupon two of my servants appeared; people clap their hands in India to save the trouble of ringing a bell.

"What *do* those men want?" I asked, while my little child crept close up to me, a good deal alarmed at the sight of the bears.

The men were now salaaming away as hard as they could, their noses nearly touching the ground each time. And the poor bears were alternately standing on their heads and on their feet, in order to show their respect, I suppose, as well as activity.

My butler grinned, and showed all his white teeth, as he said: "Dese plenty good people, Missis; just coming to show Missis and Missy Baba plenty clever tricks, dese bears do."

"Oh," I said, "they want to show off their performing bears!" Then I asked baby if she would be frightened; but, as she had climbed up into my lap by this time—a

haven of refuge, in her eyes, from every danger—she smiled and said "No." So I told the butler to let the men know we would see the bears do their tricks.

I can hardly tell you all the clever things the bears did; they danced, they marched, keeping step like soldiers; they presented arms, and went through their drill in the most marvellous way, and appeared extremely docile and obedient.

At the end of the performance, the two men, with many profound salaams, announced their intention of engaging in a wrestling match, each with his own particular bear—(this the butler interpreted to me)—and accordingly a most desperate struggle took place between the bears and their masters. They hugged one another, and twisted and turned and tumbled about in the most curious, and, to me, alarming manner.

I noticed that one of the bears had much longer claws than the other; but he seemed to manage not to hurt his master, and all appeared to end happily, when a dispute began between the two men, and they began to wrestle with the bears again, but this time choosing a new adversary. The bears were now not wrestling with their own masters, and to my horror, I discovered that the one with the long claws was making use of them in earnest now. The poor man was bleeding terribly! I had to make the servants rush out with sticks, to beat him off. However, at last his own master succeeded in making him let go. But it was only just in time, for the poor native had been most cruelly hugged.

THE STORK.

I WONDER if any of you little people are as fond of hearing about curious birds and animals as I used to be when I was a little girl. I remember that I was particularly fond of hearing stories about storks, and when I was about five years old I tried to compose a piece of poetry to a stork. It began—

> Stork, stork, funny old stork,
> What nice long legs to take a walk!

I thought that sounded like poetry, but you see I was only five years old. The reason I liked storks so much was because I had heard they were kind to their little baby-storks. Once, I know, I had a good cry when my mamma told me a story of two storks, who had built their nest on the top of a farmhouse. Unfortunately, the farmhouse caught fire, and the poor little children storks, being too young to fly, could not escape. The papa and mamma flew screaming round and round the burning house; at last they dashed wildly into the midst of the flames and were burnt with their little ones. Although I cried at this story, it will be wiser of you not to do so. One may be too tender-hearted. Besides, the sad event happened long ago—many years before I was a little girl.

In most European countries storks are occasionally seen, but they are found principally in Holland. At the approach

of winter they fly off to Africa and return to cool climates in the spring. In Holland they are very kindly treated, for so many frogs live in the marshes there, that if the storks did not eat them, the people would hardly know what to do. The storks are very clever at catching the poor froggies; they snatch them up in their long bills, and go flying off, with their great wings spread and their long legs stretched out behind them, carrying away two or three frogs at once. They are so gentle that they sometimes play with children in Holland.

These birds regularly visit Holland, and are really looked upon there with a sort of reverence. People are so anxious that the storks should build on, or near their houses, that they often stick a half barrel in the branches of a tall tree, to make the storks take possession of it as a nest; and there is immense rejoicing in a Dutch family if a pair of these birds favour them with their presence.

Old Mr. Stork stands always on one leg at the edge of his large nest, keeping guard whilst his wife is sitting; and if he thinks danger is near he throws up his head and clatters his beak in a most terrible manner, making a noise like that of niggers playing the bones.

Not only are storks beloved in Holland, but they are equally well thought of in Germany. In the little city of Baden-Baden, near the river Rhine, the stork is thought much of, and as it is a very quiet town the storks think much of it, and are often to be seen there. The same birds, I

have read, often come back, year after year, to the same nest in that town.

Storks have whitish bodies, dark feathers in their wings, long, red legs, and a red bill, and a dark circle round their eyes. Storks' nests are generally made of coarse twigs, and are often built on the tops of chimneys. They walk in the tamest way about the streets and in the markets of the towns they frequent.

Now, I must tell you a story about a stork, which I think will amuse you, though I will not vouch for the truth of it.

Once upon a time an old woman lived in a country village. She was a very tidy and respectable old body, but her general knowledge was not great. She could sew and knit, and keep her cottage very tidy, but she could not read, and her knowledge of geography was extremely limited. For instance, if anyone said to her "I am going to Paris, to-morrow, Goody," or, "I'm going to Australia, to-morrow, Goody," she would have shaken her head, and said it was "a fine thing, a rare fine thing to travel," without having the least idea which was the farthest off, and would probably ask you to give her best love to her nephew, Jack, if you happened to meet him, he being just landed in New York.

Well, I must tell you that old Goody Martin was very fond of animals and birds; she was an old maid, and had, therefore, had no little children of her own to love, but she dearly loved her nephews and nieces, and particularly her nephew, Jack. Now, Jack knew of his aunt's love for birds,

and so forth, and, as he was a sailor, he had opportunities of gratifying her, and one day he assured her that he would bring her home a pretty bird from abroad. Well, Jack forgot his promise more than once, and when he was going abroad next time his old aunt begged of him to bring her home a foreign bird, meaning a parrot, of course.

"But," said Jack, "I ain't going to the Indies, Aunt, I'm only a-going to Rotterdam, and shall be home in a few weeks, and in Holland, you know, they hasn't only one kind of foreign bird, and I guess as you wouldn't care for that."

"Oh, yes, Jack, I should dearly!" cried old Goody. "So do'ee be sure and bring me home one of them."

Jack agreed; and in a few weeks, as he promised, he returned from his travels. Old Goody had been looking out for him most anxiously, and had told all her friends and acquaintances of the "beautiful foreign bird" her "nephy, Jack, was going to bring her, surely."

One evening, in autumn, Goody was sitting over the fire with one favourite gossip, both enjoying their cup of tea, when a knock came to the cottage door, and in came Jack, carrying an enormous basket.

"Oh! there be my foreign bird!" cried Goody, in delight, expecting a parrot to appear when Jack undid the basket.

You may be sure she was not a little surprised and alarmed when out stepped a young stork. Although she did not expect this strange pet, the story says that Goody and her stork got on very well together.

BEAVERS AT WORK.

F you look at the picture you will see three beavers; I dare say they are papa, mamma, and little son. They are wonderfully clever animals; and there is a great deal to be told about them, they have such curious, cunning ways.

Beavers are found chiefly in North America, but they are also seen in the South of France and in the islands of the Rhone, and they are plentiful in the North of Europe. But, in the latter countries, they do not seem to show such intelligence as in more desert places, for the fact of European countries being thickly inhabited prevents their collecting together, and working in large numbers, as they do in some parts of North America. It appears as though their cleverness is only fully developed when a great number act together, a proof, indeed, of the truth of the saying, that "union is strength."

Beavers are about three-and-a-half feet long, including the funny, flat, paddle-shaped tail, which is a foot in length. The long, shining hair that covers the back is chestnut coloured, while the fine, soft wool, which lies next the skin, is greyish brown. The tail is covered with scales, and the beaver uses it as a rudder to direct his course when swimming; his hind feet are webbed, and the toes of his fore

feet are separated like fingers, with which he takes up food to put into his mouth. The beaver appears to be the connecting link between quadrupeds and fishes, just as the bat does between quadrupeds and birds.

They build themselves most wonderful huts to live in, and make a great number close together, just like a town. These are built on the banks of rivers or lakes, for beavers swim much more easily than they walk, and always prefer moving about in the water. They form into large bodies in order to work together; they generally meet in the middle of summer, their number often amounting to two or three hundred. When they build on the bank of a running stream or river, they are in the habit of making a sort of wall (a dam it is called) across the stream for the purpose of keeping up the water to the height they wish. These dams are made of the branches of trees, stones and mud. They are sometimes two or three hundred yards in length, and are so cleverly constructed that they seem more like the work of a good engineer than of poor little dumb beasts.

If they find a large tree on the bank where they are beginning their dam, and they think it can be made to fall into the water, they begin by cutting it down, to form the most important part of their work. This tree will often be thicker than a man's body. Now, how do you little people suppose that these animals can cut a great tree down? Why, by gnawing at the foot of the tree with their four cutting teeth, as you see Mr. Beaver doing in the picture.

They manage this cutting work of theirs very quickly, and not only very quickly, but very cleverly, for they always make the tree fall across the river. They work all together and all seem to understand what they are to do; some are employed in gnawing the foot of the tree, others in cutting off the branches after it has fallen; others, again, go to a little distance, often across the stream, and cut down smaller trees, these they cut to a certain length, so as to make stakes of them, and then drag them to the edge of the water, and then swim with them to the place where the building is going on. These stakes they manage to sink and interweave the branches with the larger stakes. It is hardly to be believed, is it, that these little creatures can have sense and patience to overcome all the difficulties they must encounter? Fancy that one little beaver must hold up a stake in his mouth by the thick end while another little fellow has to dive to the bottom of the water and dig a hole with his paws for the thin end of the stake to be fixed in, while other little workmen swim to shore and bring earth in their mouths and forepaws; this they pat with their feet, and beat firm with their funny fish-like tails, and build a regular strong, solid wall. If by any chance this dam gets broken, then these clever little animals know at once how to repair it.

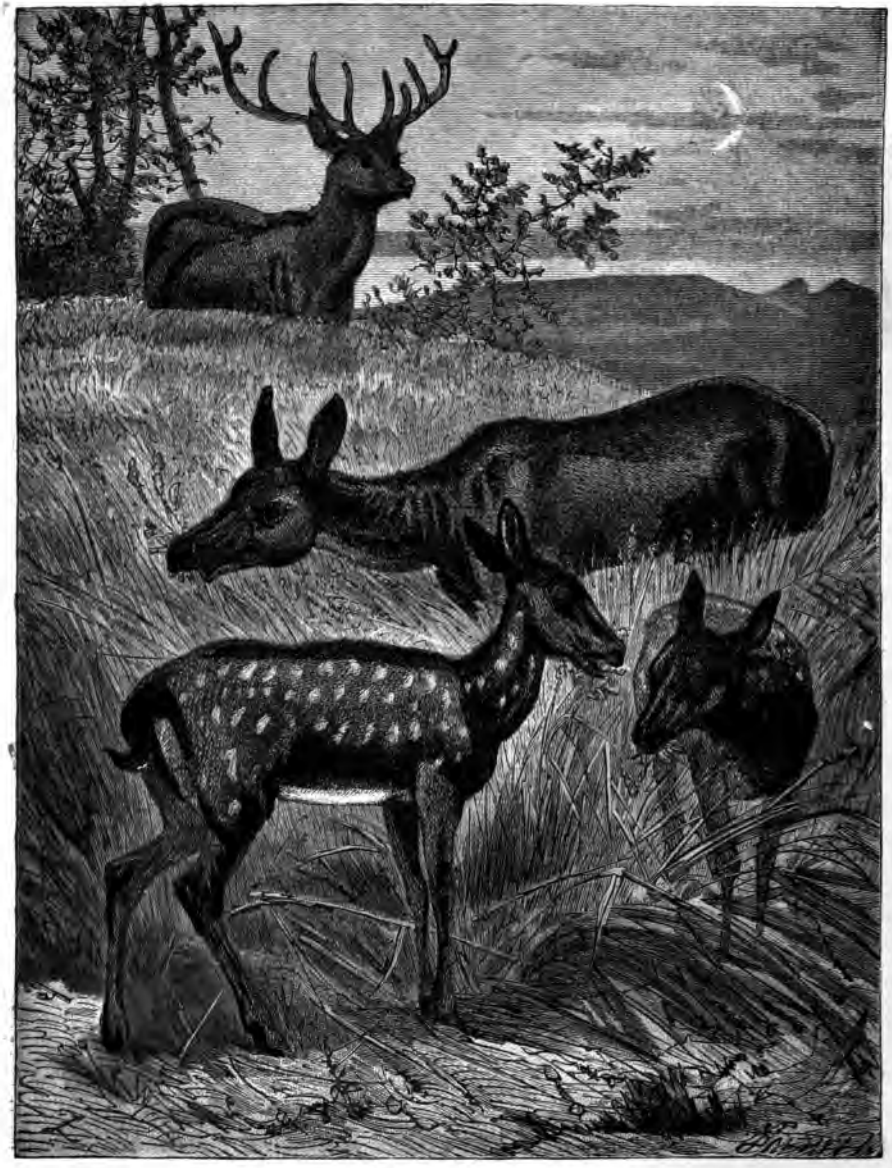
Their huts are built very much in the same manner as the dams, on piles near the water. They make two openings, one to the water and the other to the land. These houses

are generally round, some two or three stories high, and twenty or even thirty feet round; the walls are often two feet thick. You see large families often live in one house, and as I dare say little young beavers are inclined to have a romp sometimes, the old ones take care that their houses are too strongly built to be romped down. Besides, they take care that neither rain nor wind shall hurt them, for they build their houses so strongly that they resist both. The houses are neatly plastered with a sort of mortar which they make, and put on with their tails, which answer very well as trowels.

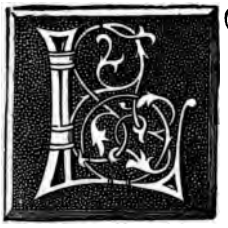
They peel off the bark from the wood they use in building and lay it up in store for winter food. Their chief food in summer, and, indeed, whenever they can get it, is fish.

I have heard but of one tame beaver, and that, although very gentle, did not seem happy in captivity. He was tame, but not loving, like a dog. He used to beg to be fed from his master's table, uttering little plaintive cries, and holding out his little paw when a piece of cake or bread or fruit were given to him. He used to run off with it, and hide it, to eat at his leisure. This little beaver would never touch meat, whether raw or roasted. He was very mischievous, and gnawed everything he could find, such as stuff, or wood; indeed he did much damage to the furniture.

I think I have told you as much about beavers as you would care to hear, my little friends; but when you get older, I dare say you will read more about them in larger books



DEER.



OOK at that fine stag in the picture, keeping guard while the does and fawns are feeding! How watchful he looks, with his head erect; and how grandly his antlers spread out, as we see them against the soft twilight sky! Deer in their wild state are timid creatures; at least, they are very much afraid of human beings; and it is difficult to approach them. Shooting the wild deer in the Highlands of Scotland is considered excellent sport: it is called deer-stalking. Large herds are to be found there among the mountains, but the greatest caution and skill are needed to get near enough to have a shot at them without being observed. Of course, the deer we see in parks are comparatively tame: they are generally fallow deer; while those of the Highlands are a larger and stronger species, called red deer.

I dare say many of you little people who read this have been to Richmond Park, and seen the herds of graceful fallow deer there. If you go up very gently to them, perhaps they will come and eat bread out of your hand. At least, I remember when I was a little girl, and passed a summer at Richmond, I succeeded once in making two young fawns come and share my biscuit with me. Shall I tell you how it happened?

One morning I had not learnt my lessons as well as usual; perhaps I had been watching the butterflies from the window flitting about in the sunshine, instead of looking at my book; at any rate, Miss Dobson, my governess, thought it necessary to punish me. Now, I was too big to be put into the corner, being nine years old; and the mode of punishment she always adopted was to avoid speaking to me for an hour or so, and at the same time to put on an expression of face at once severe and sorrowful.

After school hours we went out for our walk in the park as usual; and, as I was an affectionate and very talkative child, you may suppose that Miss Dobson's gloomy face and freezing silence made me very miserable. If I ventured upon a remark, the answer never extended beyond "Yes" or "No": sometimes not even that. We had two great dogs, which generally went out with us on our walk; but when I was under punishment, even their companionship was not allowed.

At last Miss Dobson seated herself under a great oak, and began to read a book she had brought out with her. Then I wandered a little way off, picking the pretty wild flowers that grew amongst the fern. The birds were singing in the sunshine, the bees were humming, everything with life seemed to enjoy that life but me. Some deer were lying under the shadow of the trees not far away; and I observed that two pretty little fawns, standing nearer to me than the rest, were watching me. I had some biscuit in my

pocket, intended for the dogs; and, taking a piece in my hand, I walked up very softly to the little creatures. They looked at me, as I approached, with a frightened glance from their great dark eyes; but I fancy there must have been a sad and subdued expression in my childish face which took away from my appearance what might have terrified them, and on consideration they decided to remain.

Holding out the biscuit, I dropped it near them; then up jumped Mrs. Doe, and came forward to see what it was I offered to her children. I threw her a piece also, which she took and munched gladly, and the little ones followed her example. I cannot describe to you what a comfort it was to me in my trouble to find that these pretty creatures were not afraid of me, and did not shun me. I no longer felt solitary; no longer without friends or companions. Presently they took the biscuit from my fingers, and when I had no more to give them, they still thrust their soft noses into my little hand, and let me stroke them.

But my pleasure did not last long. A fine stag, the leader of the herd, who was lying in the midst of them, and who, I suppose, had been half asleep, seemed suddenly to become conscious of my presence, and took alarm. Jumping up, he bounded away, followed by the rest of the herd, and my two little friends went after the others.

Looking at them as they fled away from me, I felt more forlorn and solitary than ever, and tears came into my eyes. Presently Miss Dobson came up to me; she had been

watching me from a distance, and now, finding that I was crying, her manner changed, and she was very kind. In fact, my punishment was over for the time, and I think she began to find that it was a kind of punishment which I felt more than she intended.

The red deer is now very uncommon in England, though that is the kind chiefly found in Scotland, and is what is hunted by the deer-stalker. The stags are magnificent creatures, with a perfect forest of horns upon their heads.

Formerly, any person who poached venison—that is, killed deer—belonging to another person was sentenced to death.

Stags are most formidable creatures when angry; they attack people with their fore feet, with as much force as with their horns; and the pointed hoofs of the animal are almost as dangerous. I read the other day of a gentleman who had been feeding a stag with pieces of grass, and was stroking his neck and shoulders, which caressing he seemed rather to approve of, when suddenly the stag reared up, and struck two blows with his fore-feet so quickly that, although the gentleman sprang back, the second stroke caught him on the finger, and hurt it so much that he could not use it for days.

Stags are wonderfully fleet, as we all know, I think; and they are capable of undergoing immense fatigue, and keeping it up for a long time. An instance has been known of a stag swimming for ten miles.

WOODPECKERS.

ERE we have a picture of woodpeckers. See how they cling to the bark of the tree with their claws, and how eager the two little ones seem for the prize their mother has just captured. The woodpecker is a bird of very singular habits. It lives upon the insects which exist in the bark of trees, and is remarkably adapted by nature for obtaining this kind of food. Its bill is long and sharp and powerful; and with its hooked claws it clings to the tree while it sways its body to and fro, to give force to the strokes of its bill. The object of these strokes is to shake the insects out of the tree, and they are given with wonderful force and in rapid succession. Then the bird thrusts its long tongue into the crevices, and the tongue being barbed at the end and covered with a sort of gum, it secures a vast number of insects as well as their eggs.

In the quiet of the woods the sound of the woodpecker tapping may be heard at a great distance. I remember once, when I was a little girl, being very much frightened by the noise: I will tell you how it happened.

The house where I lived in the country not only had a large garden, but beyond that was a little wood, which we called the shrubbery. This wood had a broad walk winding

through it, with seats placed here and there. One beautiful summer morning I and my brother, who was some years older than I was, were sitting together upon one of these seats under the shade of the trees. He was on his way to go out fishing, and was only stopping to do something to his fishing tackle. Wanting a pair of scissors, he sent me into the house to fetch them, ordering me about in the way in which big boys are apt to order their little brothers and sisters.

I soon returned with the scissors, but no longer found my brother where I had left him. The truth is he had gone off on his fishing expedition without waiting for my return. However, I looked about for him, and presently I heard a sound like somebody hitting a tree with a stick. "Ah, ah, so you are hiding, are you, Master Maurice?" thought I; and I looked behind different trees, one after another, thinking every moment to discover him. Then I began to fancy that the sound, although so clear and distinct, was some distance off; so I wandered on, still following it, and looking about as I went. Now and then the tapping ceased, but always went on again after a minute.

At last I began to be frightened, and called out:—"Maurice, dear Maurice, where are you? You are frightening me." The tapping ceased from that moment, but my alarm did not. That such a noise should have been made without anybody to make it seemed to me very like something supernatural. I began to cry, and at the same time

set off running towards home. I dared not look behind me as I ran, and when I reached the house was at first too frightened and excited even to explain what was the matter. I must tell you that I was only seven years old at that time.

I remember the old gardener said, when he heard the story, that he suspected that it was only a woodpecker tapping; but I refused to believe that a bird could make so loud a noise. It was not till long afterwards, when I happened to both hear and see one, that I became convinced the old gardener was right.

The woodpecker is a handsome bird, about the size of a pigeon, of a greenish colour, with black and white marks upon the wings, and a crimson stain upon the head. It is heard much oftener than seen, for, being very timid, it is ingenious in hiding itself. It does not build a nest like other birds, but seeks for a decayed place in the trunk of some tree, where it scoops out a hole. There Mr. and Mrs. Woodpecker establish their little home: there the eggs are laid, and the young ones are reared.

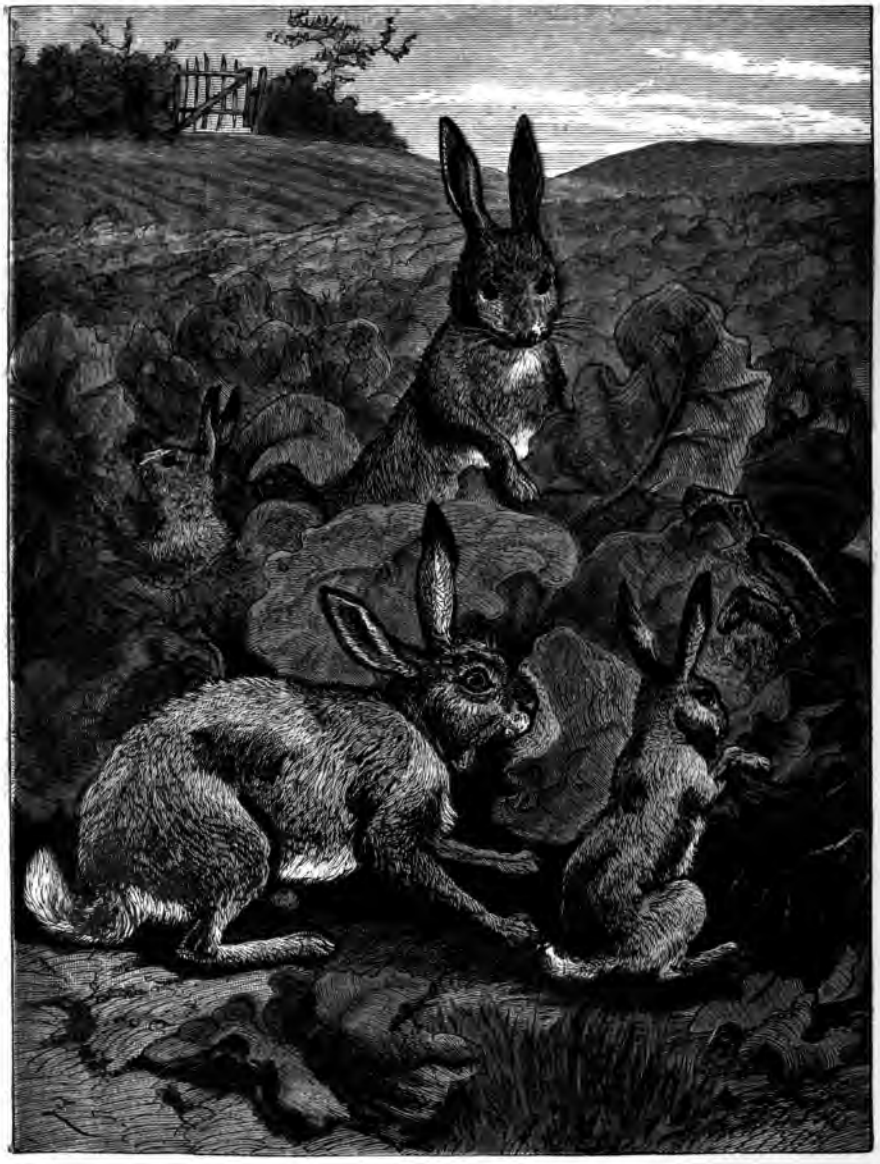
There is another handsomer kind of woodpecker which is a native of North America, and which is called the ivory-billed woodpecker. This bird is armed with a tremendous beak, long and strong, and sharp, and as white as ivory. The bird uses this great powerful beak as a means of obtaining food, or as a valuable weapon to be used against his enemies.

The woodpecker is a shy bird and must be looked for in

woods, rather than in gardens, though if it thinks that there is a garden with nice trees in it and plenty of insects, *and no* noisy little people to be inquisitive and disturb it, this curious bird will sometimes make its nest there, feeling, perhaps, more secure than it would be in a wood where there might be all sorts of wild enemies about.

There is another bird of the same species which is very curious; it is the nuthatch. It is the same shy bird in its habits as the woodpecker, though it will sometimes become bold, and be seen in gardens where nuts are grown. This bird also feeds upon insects which it procures from under the bark; and most likely it chiefly relishes in the nut the little maggot which is so often found inside. In order to get at the inside of a nut the nuthatch fixes the nut firmly in a crevice of the bark of a tree and then by dint of tremendous hammering with its beak it breaks a hole in the shell.

I have heard some people say that the woodpecker does not make the tapping noise which one is accustomed to suppose is made by them; but that it is invariably the nuthatch which hammers so loudly. Their reason being that the woodpecker selects in every case a soft wood to peck a hole in; and, therefore, it would not be likely to make a loud noise. The nuthatch will tap away loudly at some hard nut and make such a noise that you would almost fancy that someone was striking a tree with a hammer. This curious little bird will sometimes cut a filbert right in two, as clean as if it had been cut by a knife.



HARES.

THE picture on the opposite page shows us a family of hares enjoying themselves in a field of cabbages. How pretty, and yet how queer-looking they are! I think that one standing up in the middle, with his ears so straight up, must be Mr. Hare, while the others are Mrs. Hare and the children. They are eating away as fast as they can, while the good papa looks on, and listens with those long ears of his for the sound of any approaching footsteps. If he hear any noise of a kind which he considers alarming, he will give notice to his wife and little ones; then they will all scurry off so fast that they will soon be miles away from the spot where they have been frightened.

A hare never walks or trots, because the hind legs are so much longer than the front ones; but it goes along in a succession of bounds. Hares can take great leaps, too, in height as well as in distance: they have been known, when pursued, to jump over very high hedges, and even walls of moderate size. One curious quality in a hare is that it never becomes fat, however rich the pasture may be on which it feeds; consequently it can go very long distances without fatigue.

Though rabbits are easily domesticated, it is very unusual

to see a really tame hare; and you will be surprised to hear that the only one I ever met with was in a house in London. I went one day to call upon a gentleman—an artist—who was very fond of animals: indeed, among other things, he often painted animals. I found him in his studio, working away at his picture, with three dogs and a cat and her kittens all in the room with him. I sat for some time talking and admiring his picture, when presently I heard an odd sort of knocking or rubbing at the door.

"I hear someone at the door," said I, after the noise had been going on for some time, thinking my friend did not hear it.

"Oh, that's only stupid old Tommy; he is such a bother; he never seems able to settle anywhere now he's so old."

"Who is he?" I asked, thinking he was speaking of some stupid old person.

"Would you like to see him?" said the artist; "he is not particularly handsome now, and he is dreadfully impudent."

Walking to the door, he opened it, and who should come hopping and leaping into the room but a gigantic hare. He hopped past me first, and then, turning round, came quite close, and stood up on his hind legs. He made one long ear stick forward and the other backward, looking more comical than I can tell you; and he twisted his curious, sensitive, moveable nose round and round, while he stared at me with his immense prominent eyes till I thought they were going to drop out.

"That isn't manners, Tommy," said my friend; "it's very rude to stare so: lie down." Whereupon good, obedient Tommy crouched down, with his nose between his two front paws; laid his ears back flat on his neck, and did his best, I am sure, not to stare—but that he could not help, by reason of the peculiar nature of his eyes.

I caressed him, and found him as tame and gentle as a little dog. Indeed, my friend had had him from the time he was a very tiny creature.

I dare say you all, or most of you, if you have lived in the country, have had tame rabbits in hutches; but I wonder if any of you have ever had a tame rabbit running about the house like the hare that I have been telling you of. I know some children who have; and do you know that my own children very nearly had one; and I dare say you little people would like to know how it was they nearly had it, and yet did not; so I will tell you all about it.

We live in London, you must know; and one morning my housemaid came to me and said, "If you please, ma'am, my sister was so surprised this morning to find a large black and white rabbit sitting on her scullery window-sill."

"I do not wonder at her being surprised," said I. "Who can it belong to?"

I must tell you that my housemaid's sister lives as cook in a house in a street close to us; and the back of the house where she lives looks on to the back of the houses that our house faces. I suggested that the rabbit must have escaped

from one of those houses; but it was supposed impossible, as rather a high wall ran between the gardens.

"My sister don't know what to do with it, ma'am," said my housemaid. "Her ladies is away, and she don't want to keep it."

"She had better let the tradespeople know," I said.

Some hours passed, and nobody appeared to own the rabbit; and the cook said it was lying down in the kitchen by the side of the cat, as tame as possible.

Whereupon the children cried, "Oh, mamma, *do* let us have it, and we can give it up if anyone claims it." And so we did have it. The children and I made it a hutch out of a box. How hard we worked! But when Master Bunny came, he refused to stay in the hutch. Directly we put him in, he tried to squeeze himself through the bars; so we let him out, and he ran about the room just like a dog or cat. He eat out of our hands, and was a perfect darling of a rabbit! Alas! though, he only stayed with us one day; for the next morning his little mistress—who did live in one of the houses nearly opposite to us—arrived, and asked for her rabbit; and I cannot tell you what an affectionate meeting they had. I do not know which was the most delighted of the two. It appeared that the rabbit had managed to jump over the wall, and then had lost himself. His little mistress ran off with him, cuddled up in her arms, across the road, as happy as possible; and my children were left feeling quite sad at the loss of the new pet.

GROUSE.

OOK, there is a nice little family of grouse, consisting of papa, mamma, and four children, all taking a pleasant walk among the heath and fern. At the same time, the old birds are searching for the wild berries, the buds of the heath, and the seeds which form their principal food. Look how eager the young ones are to have their share of some nice berries, which Mamma Grouse has just found!

These birds are only met with on moors or wild heaths, and chiefly in mountainous countries; indeed, Scotland is the country where they are now principally found, and people often go there on purpose for the grouse-shooting. I dare say some of my little readers already know that grouse-shooting begins on the 12th of August, a great day for sportsmen. From the way in which game is now preserved in England, partridge-shooting has come to be a tamer sport than it used to be. Many brace of partridges may sometimes be brought down during a short walk over cultivated fields; and such sport seems less manly than taking long fatiguing walks over breezy moors, as sportsmen have to do in search of grouse.

The grouse is a very wild and shy bird; and both skill and caution are required in approaching them; they live in

flocks, called "packs," and form their nests, as partridges do, upon the ground. Their plumage is a rich brown, mottled with paler spots; the tail is black, with the exception of four of the feathers, which have red marks on them: over the eye, also, is a rough, bare red spot.

I once made the acquaintance of a tame grouse—one, at least, that had been domesticated. The gentleman it belonged to had picked it up out of its nest when a tiny thing on the moors in Scotland; and being a great bird-fancier, and having a collection, he had brought it in a cage to his house in Kent. When I saw Peter—that was the name given the grouse—he was quite tame, but very ill-tempered. You might take him up if you pleased, but he always pecked the hand that did so. Peter was supposed to live habitually in a wicker cage, but in truth he ha pretty well the run of the house. More than once he ha taken flight beyond the premises, but had returned for h food. One day, however, he was missed, and never car back. His fate may be surmised from the fact that ab the same time a party of gentlemen in the neighbourhc being out shooting—it was September—were surprise find a grouse among the game they had killed.

Although I have never known but one tame grouse, I made the acquaintance of more than one tame part and pheasant also. Indeed, I once had a tame par myself, and I will tell you how it came into my poss One day in Spring I was walking across some field

my governess, and I suddenly came upon a partridge nest. It lay on the ground—a roughly arranged bundle of dried grass—and in it were nearly a dozen young partridges, only just hatched. "What are they?" I asked of my governess. "What funny, pretty little things!"

"Those are young partridges," said she; "take care you don't hurt them, or your papa would be very angry; we are on his property, I think."

"Yes," said I, "this field is papa's. Of course, I won't hurt them, but how I should like to take one home to pet. They are so young, I'm sure they would be easily tamed. May I carry one off, Miss Mayfield?"

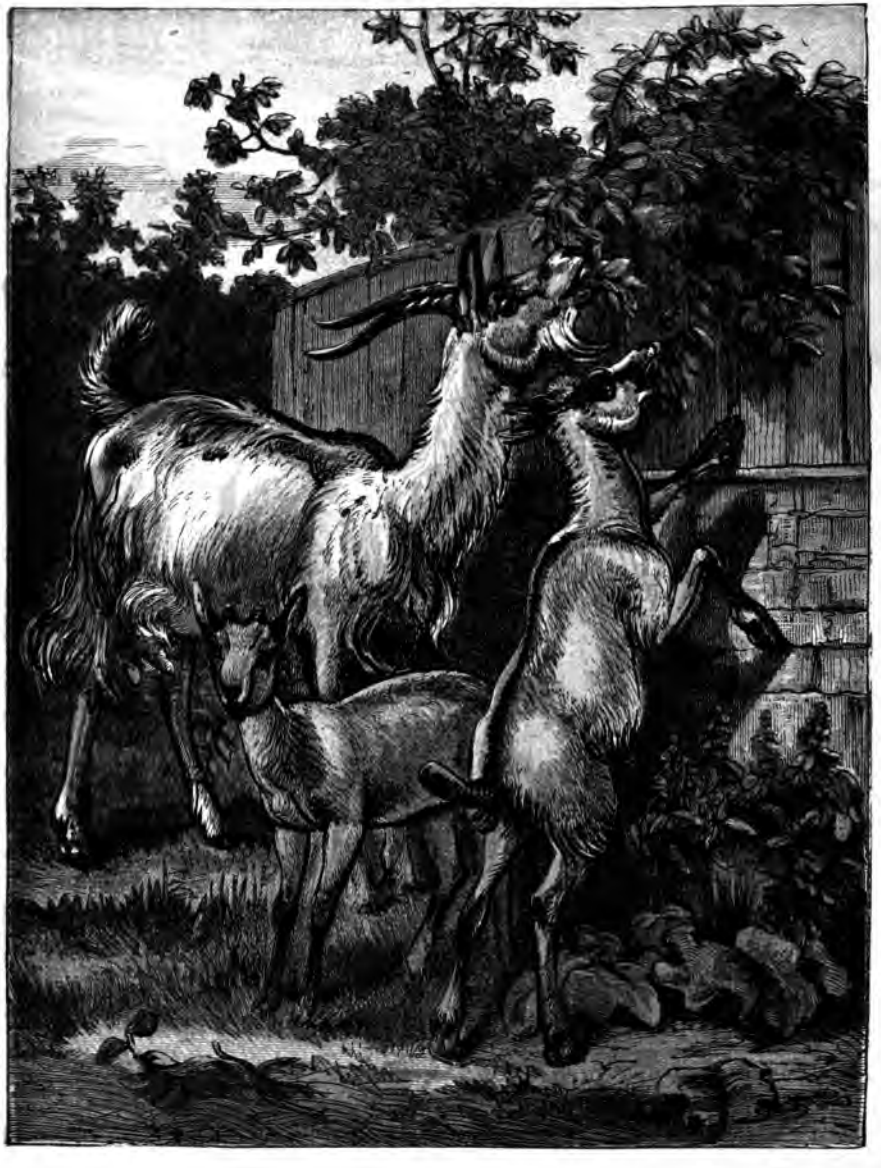
"Very well," replied Miss Mayfield, "but I believe," she added, laughing, "that we are incurring all sorts of penalties by poaching in this way."

"As papa would be the person to proceed against us, I don't think we need be very much afraid," I said, "and you know, Miss Mayfield, that both he and mamma like us to pet animals, and try and tame them."

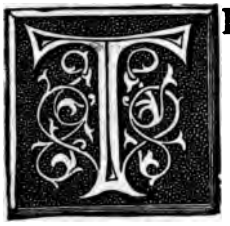
So I picked up my little baby partridge and carried it home. At first I kept it in an old dove's cage and fed it with the same food that was given to young chickens. I often had it out of its cage, and at last it would follow me about anywhere. I gave it the name of "Speckles," and the little fat bird would run up to me like a little dog when I called it. Sometimes I found Speckles' affection rather overpowering, and it occasionally got me into trouble. For

instance, one day a lady, who wore a very palpable wig, called upon my mother. It was in the summer, and Speckles, who was running about on the lawn after me, followed me into the drawing-room, where I was called, through the open window by mamma. At first I did not notice Speckles, who came running in as a matter of course. I stood in front of my mother's visitor, who was very good-natured, and talked very kindly to me. But I was rather surprised to find that, as I watched her plain but amiable face, her forehead seemed to grow higher! I looked, and looked again! No, there could be no doubt about it, Miss Purket's hair was fast receding; bonnet and hair too retreated together, with sundry curious little jerks! The fact was that Speckles had, unheard and unseen, mounted on the back of her chair, and was closely examining the lady's bonnet to which it gave a little peck every now and then.

In a moment I suspected the true state of the case, and without saying anything, I stepped behind Miss Purket's chair, and made a grab at the offender. Alas! I but increased the mischief already done! I tried to catch Speckles, but he was too quick for me; as I stretched out my hands to seize him, the partridge gave a queer sort of little cry and flew on the top of Miss Purket's bonnet; in doing which he succeeded in dragging off the unlucky bonnet entirely, wig and all! I shall never forget the sight of Miss Purket's bald head, and face of dismay as she turned round. The scene was too terrible to dwell upon!



GOATS.



HIS, you see, is a picture of goats, enjoying a feast of nice fresh young leaves from that tree which hangs over the paling. How greedily the little kid there, standing on his hind legs, reaches up to eat, while the other little fellow stands with pricked-up ears and wide-open eyes, holding a sprig of some tree in his mouth. He has heard a noise, and is on the watch, fearful lest some enemy should come, and ready to spring away in a moment.

This picture just represents a family of common European goats. They are fleet, active creatures. In their wild state they delight in climbing rocks, and bounding about at the edge of precipices, as sure-footed as the chamois. Even our tame goats here at home are so fond of climbing that they always get on to some high place, even on to the tops of houses or outbuildings, when they have a chance.

You know, children, how tame and gentle these creatures can be made; for I am sure there is scarcely one of you but has ridden in a goat-chaise at some time of his or her life; yes, and has sat up in state, and held the reins, and driven the poor little willing goat too. But I trust that the little hands have been merciful the while, and that the poor goat's mouth has not been jerked and dragged till every tooth in

its head ached. And how about the whips? Goats' skins are not very sensitive, perhaps; but I am terribly afraid that some little children whip their goats till they must smart again. Now, if your consciences accuse you—and I address myself to any of my little readers—make up your minds never to be cruel to goats, or any other living creature, again.

When I was in India I had a number of goats: they were kept to give milk. I grew quite fond of them, and they knew me so well that they would come trotting after me, baaing at me for bread or sugar, whenever I walked out in the compound.

I have been told that at the Cape of Good Hope large flocks of these animals are kept, and they are very sagacious, requiring no goatherd to look after them. In this respect they are very different from sheep: they start off in an orderly flock, of their own accord, to find their food in the morning, and they return in the same orderly fashion in the evening.

Goats are almost the only animals that will face fire. On some occasions when stables have caught fire, they have been known to save the lives of horses by setting them a good example, and boldly leading the way through smoke and flame out of the burning stables.

I think you would like to hear of a very kind thing that one of my goats did in India. When you have heard the story, I am sure you will say that goats are very nice ani-

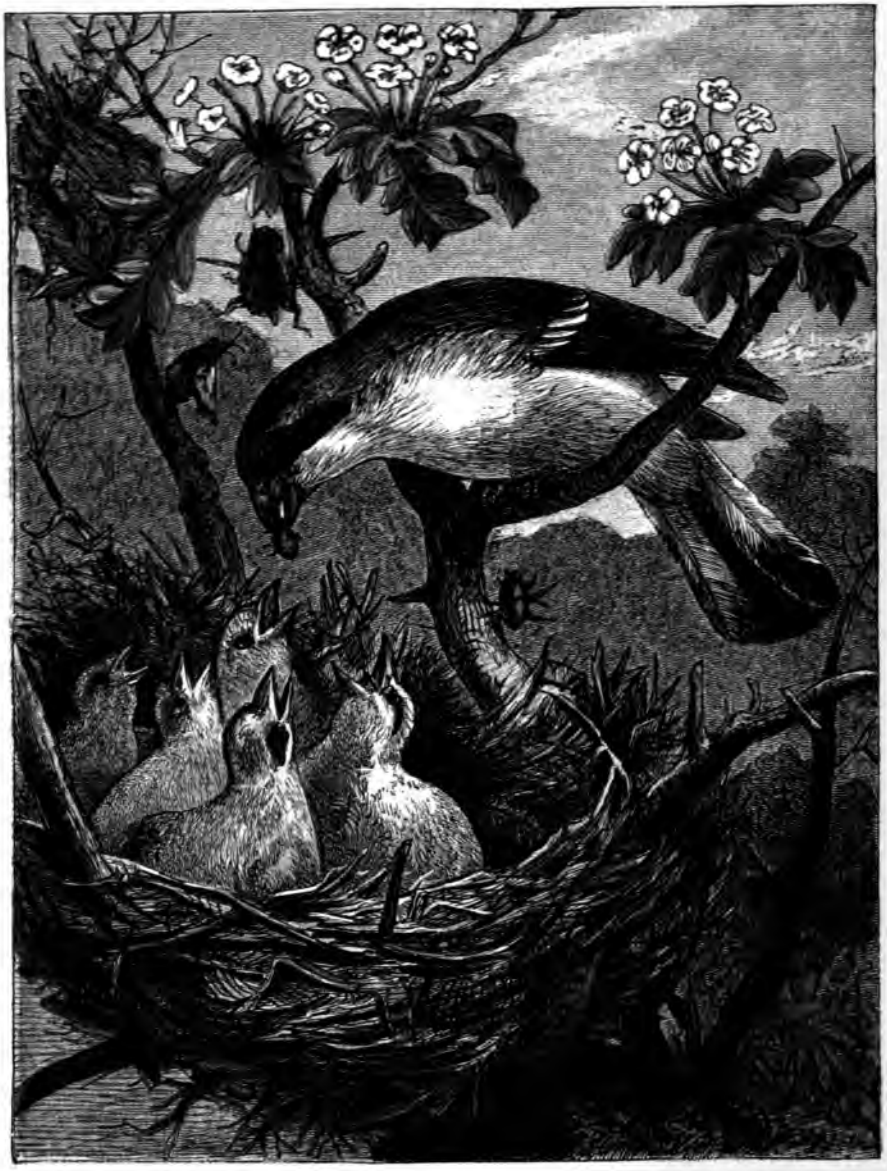
mals. You must know—indeed, I dare say you have heard —that when people travel in India, they take a great many things with them—such as tents, and furniture, and cooking utensils, and also a great many people—that is, black servants—and also a good many animals. Now, once, when I was travelling in India, I took several of my goats with me, as we knew we should want milk, and the cows in India are often delicate, and moving about does not agree with them; so we left the cows at home, and took the goats with us. We were only going on a little hunting expedition, and intended returning to Bellary—the station where we lived in India—in a week or two.

Well, one day, on our journey, we came upon a herd of antelopes—which, I dare say you know, is a kind of small deer. They are very beautiful little animals, most graceful, with lovely, pleading, large dark eyes, and the tiniest delicate little legs in the world. The herd was so startled at our appearance that the little creatures composing it dashed off, as fast as they could gallop, at a moment's notice. Indeed, one little mother antelope was in such a fright that she scampered off, leaving her young one behind her! This was very shocking and unnatural of her; but the poor thing must have quite lost her head, as people say, from terror, or I'm sure she never could have left the little creature. When the herd had gallopped a great way off, I saw something moving on the ground, at a short distance from the road on which we were travelling, and just where

the antelopes had been. I was on horseback, and I rode up to it, and found it was a little young antelope. I got off my horse, and picked the poor little creature up, and carried it back to the road, and put it into one of the "bandies," as the carriages you use for travelling are called. I covered it up, and laid it on some hay, with which I made it a nice soft bed; and it lay there quietly for some time. But when we reached our resting-place for the night—where we found our tents already pitched—the difficulty arose of how should the poor little antelope be fed and brought up. I tried to give it some milk in a spoon, but the little creature would not take it.

I did not know what to do; but at that moment one of my goats popped its head into the tent, and the thought occurred to me that, perhaps, she would have pity upon the poor antelope. This goat had left her little kid at home only a couple of days before, so I fancied that she would take to and mother my little charge.

I called the goat, who was very tame, into the tent, and showed her the antelope; and I was rejoiced to see that she stooped down and sniffed at it, first, quite gently, and then licked it; and before many minutes had passed, she had quite adopted it as her own child The antelope throve well, and grew up into a fine, strong, healthy creature, very tame and loving, and most beautiful to look at. I can assure you I felt very grateful to the kind goat, for I should never have been able to rear my little pet without her help.



THE SHRIKE, OR BUTCHER BIRD.

Y little readers have, none of them perhaps, ever seen this bird: it is not very common in England, though found in most parts of the globe. This one we see in the picture is feeding its young with an insect, or beetle; but the shrike is a very voracious and cruel bird. It not only eats insects, reptiles, little mice and such things, but attacks the young unfledged nestlings of smaller birds than itself, and devours them. This is why it is called by the ugly name of Butcher Bird. Fancy the horrid thing devouring the tender, weak, and helpless young of its own species! Poor little baby-birds settled comfortably in their nests, waiting for the return of papa or mamma with food, are pounced upon by these cruel creatures, carried off, torn limb from limb, and used to feed a nestful of little butcher birds!

I never saw a shrike but once, and that was many years ago. I was driving with a relation of mine, the wife of a country clergyman, to visit a sick child, the daughter of one of the parishioners. As we drove up to the farm-house, we met the child's father, who was a small farmer, coming out at the door with a gun in his hand. After inquiring about the child, we naturally asked what he was going to shoot, for it was not the shooting season. He

told us in reply that he had just seen a grey shrike up in an apple-tree in the orchard, and he was going to have a shot at it.

"For it be a rare bird, that it be," added he; "this be the furst as I've seen since I wor a boy, and loike enough I mayn't never see another, so I be a'going to shoot un."

Although the bird is so cruel itself, I did not feel inclined to see it killed, so I wished the farmer good morning. But he did "shoot un," I afterwards learnt; in fact, he butchered the butcher bird, and had it stuffed, too, and put into a glass case. In this condition I saw it. It was a handsome bird; the general colour of it was grey, but it had a white breast, and some strong black marks upon the head, wings, and tail. Its size was about that of a pigeon.

There is another kind of shrike, which is found in South America, and is called the Bush Shrike. This bird is rather larger, and more powerful than the European shrike, and has a handsome tuft of feathers on its head. It is found in forests and thick brushwood, where it passes its time in a constant search for insects, reptiles, and the young of other birds, which it devours, like the European shrike. It possesses a strong and rather hooked beak, and is a formidable enemy to any creature it may attack.

But the country in which the shrike lives on the best terms with man is New South Wales. There it is very common, and in appearance resembles the shrike of Europe.

It is called by the colonists the Piping Crow, on account of the varied strain of song it pours forth in early morning and towards evening. In this gift of song it seems to differ from the European bird; or at least, if the latter possesses such a merit, it has not been observed. In New South Wales the shrike prefers the open localities to the wooded districts; and in particular shows a preference for those parts which have been cleared by the settlers. In fact, in that country, the Piping Crow is looked upon as being a particularly trustful bird—trustful, I mean, of man. It will build its nest in the plantations or gardens of the colonists, who, particularly in the back settlements, do all they can to encourage it for the sake of its pleasant morning and evening song.

I may as well tell you here an anecdote about a shrike, not a tame shrike, far from it; but you will see, how by means of a shrike I became possessed of a dear little bulfinch.

One day in early summer, when I was staying at Penstone Rectory, I was walking about in the kitchen garden helping my sister-in-law to gather some roses to put in the vase on the drawing-room table; when my nephew Georgie came up to me and said, "Look here, Aunt Lucy, here is a poor little young bulfinch which has been knocked out of its nest by a shrike; you know, one of those butcher birds. I saw it: a biggish grey bird. I believe he killed the rest, and this one got knocked out of the nest."

"Poor little thing!" I exclaimed, and taking it out of Georgie's hand, I saw that it was more frightened than hurt. We then went to the hedge where the bulfinch's nest was, and it was indeed a sad sight; there had evidently been two or three more little young birds, that had fallen a victim to the horrible shrike. I did not see him and I was glad of it. The horrid, cruel thing!

"I will try and rear this poor little bird," I said. "Bulfinches are hardy little creatures, and I have no doubt I shall be able to bring it up."

"I don't believe you will," said Georgie.

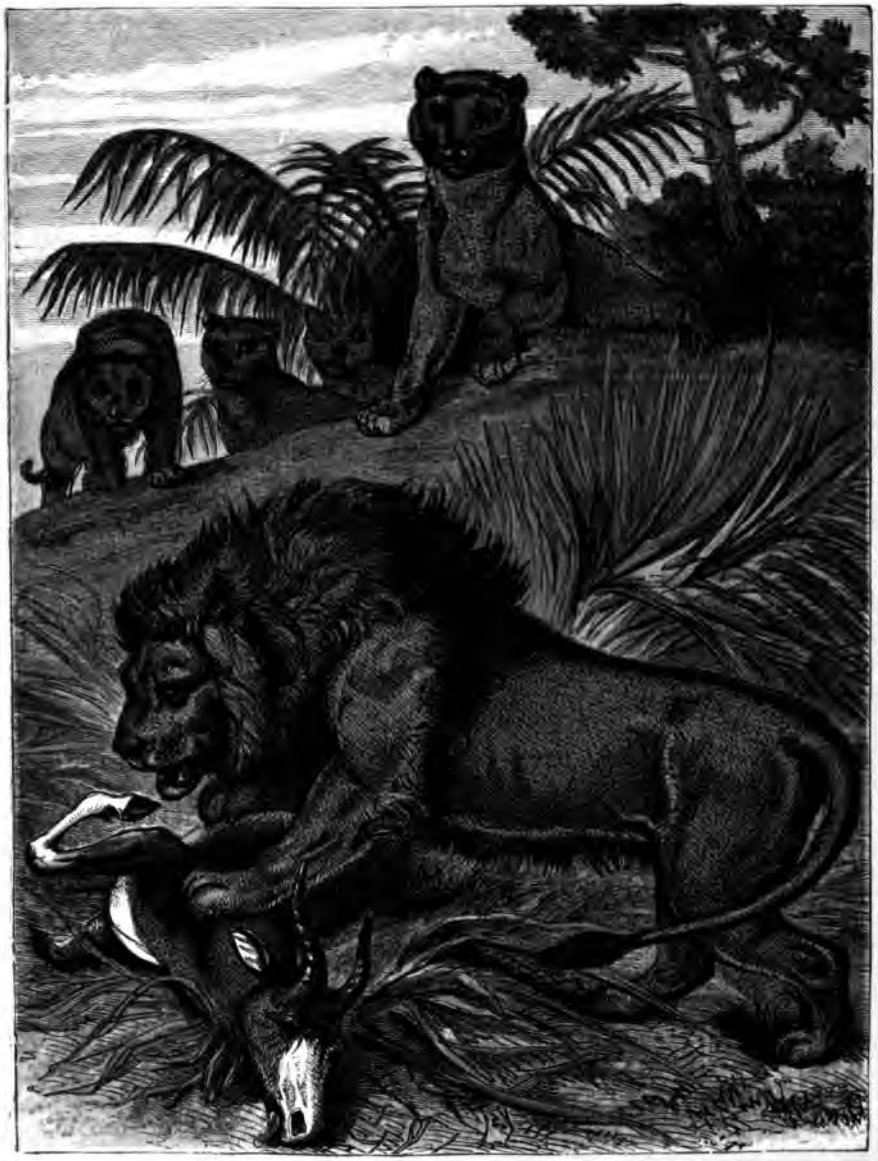
"Well, we will see," replied I; "I can but try."

When I told my sister-in-law my intention of bringing up my bulfinch fledgling, she laughed at me, and said she did not think it possible.

"Why the little creature has only half its feathers," said she.

However, I made a little nest for it in a box out of the canary-birds' breeding cage, and I fed it six or seven times a day with soft food, bread and chopped-up egg, and boiled rape seed. I used to feed it with a quill, and I had the pleasure of seeing my Bully thrive to perfection.

In a few weeks the little bird could fly round the room, and, as you may suppose, he was wonderfully tame and fond of me. He would perch on my shoulder or head, and peck at me to take notice of him. In fact he was one of the sweetest and dearest of all the many pets that I have had in my life. And I have had more than most people.



LIONS.

HE Lion is called the king of beasts, because he is the most courageous, the strongest, and the grandest-looking of all beasts. The picture represents a great lion and his family; you see he has just caught a poor little gazelle, of which herds are found in the plains of Africa. And that, as I dare say you know, is also the country of the lions.

Lions belong to what is called the cat tribe of animals, as do also tigers and leopards. The members of this tribe are remarkable for their powerful jaw, large fangs, the quickness and grace of their movements, and for the manner in which the sharp hooked claws of the feet are drawn back when not in use, and thrust forward when needed for action.

The colour of the lion is a tawny yellow, lighter on the under parts of the body, and darker above. The ears are almost black, and there is a tuft of black hair at the tip of the tail. When full-grown, the male lion has a thick, shaggy mane of long hair, which falls from the neck and shoulders, covering the throat and breast. He measures some four feet in height at the shoulder, and about eleven feet in length, including the tail. These measurements, however, only apply to the animals which have lived in freedom in their native land, with their limbs unshackled, and spirits unbroken.

The lioness is a smaller animal than her mate, the difference in size appearing greater than it really is, because she is without the shaggy mane, which makes the lion seem so grand and imposing. But though smaller, she is quite as terrible as the lion; and if she has cubs to look after and protect, she is a fearful enemy to any who cross her path.

I think it would amuse you to hear an anecdote of a revengeful lioness which I lately read. The gentleman who relates the story was out with a party of hunters in Southern Africa, in search of elephants. They had not had much sport, and as they were going to encamp for a day, this gentleman thought he would ride off alone to a patch of jungle, or wood, not far away, which appeared likely to harbour wild beasts. He discovered no sign of elephants, but he found a new footprint made by a lion. Now, he had never shot a lion, and had a great ambition to do so; accordingly, he followed the lion's track—which, of course, was very brave of him, but I must say, I think, very rash. After a little while, he came suddenly upon the savage beast, and luckily shot him dead at the first shot.

Having achieved this exploit, he was anxious to carry back the skin with him as a trophy; and therefore set to work to skin the dead beast—which, it seems to me, must have been a most horrible business. This operation took a long time: and, when accomplished, our friend the hunter found great difficulty in persuading his horse to carry the skin. Horses have a great horror of lions, and the poor

animal probably did not feel sure that the skin alone could do him no harm.

At last all was satisfactorily arranged, and the hunter started to return to the encampment; but so much time had been lost that, before he had gone far, night began to close in, and he thought it best to bivouac where he was till daylight. There was a stream of water close by; and he had with him a blanket, a flask of brandy, and a box of matches. He took the precaution, also, before it was quite dark, to shoot a guinea-fowl for his supper. Then, collecting a quantity of dry wood, he piled it up in a circle, leaving space enough inside for himself, his horse, and the skin. Setting fire to the wood, he considered himself safe from any attack of wild beasts within this magic circle of fire, and made himself comfortable for the night. He cooked and ate his supper, and then, lying down by the side of his horse, soon began to doze.

Presently he was disturbed by a loud snort from his horse. He rose up, and kicking the burning wood together with the heel of his boot, made a brighter blaze, and distinctly saw the head of an old lioness looking through the surrounding bushes. She was gone in an instant, but you may be sure the hunter did not go to sleep again. He suspected at once that she was the widow of the lion he had killed, and that she had followed the scent of his skin to be revenged upon his murderer.

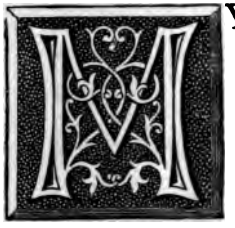
Our hunter made his fire burn as brightly as he could,

and remained upon the watch for the lioness. He thought he could see her again among the bushes, and, seizing a piece of burning wood, threw it at her; then he detected her slinking away into the darkness. He did not fire, for he saw too imperfectly to be sure of his aim. Not long afterwards he suddenly heard a terrific roar, and at the same moment some large body flew through the air close to him. Then followed a crash, and the hunter saw his poor horse knocked down, as if shot, beneath the weight of the lioness, who stood on him, tearing at him and growling. The hunter fired: the first shot wounded her, the second killed; but she had so far revenged the lion's death that she had killed the horse.

The hunter now had her skin as well as the lion's, which must have been a satisfaction to him. He set to work to skin her at once, and then buried both skins in the ground, that they might not be eaten or damaged by prowling animals, while he trudged back on foot to the encampment. In the afternoon he returned in a waggon, and fetched away both skins, which he kept as trophies.

My own experience of a lioness is of a very different sort to this, as my acquaintance with either lions or lionesses has been made only at the Zoological Gardens. But I remember a few years ago there was a dear old lioness there, who had five little cubs; and I can only say her kindness and tenderness to her young ones would have afforded a good example to many mothers.

SWANS.



Y little readers all know very well what a swan is like. Which of you has not seen the beautiful large bird sailing proudly on the water; either on some river or lake, or perhaps on the Serpentine, or round a pond in Kensington Gardens? How graceful the Swan is, with its long arched neck and pure white plumage! How grand it looks, turning slowly from side to side, followed perhaps by one or two cygnets! The mother swan casts sharp glances round her to see that no one is daring to interfere with her children. Then, too, how curiously she thrusts her long neck and head under the water, seeking for river weeds or some water insect.

In the picture there we see two swans and two growing-up cygnets. The papa and mamma swans, and one of the cygnets, are all engaged in obtaining food with their heads under water. Swans live upon water-plants, frogs, and insects; and some swans get a great deal of bread besides. Certain little friends of mine, and indeed almost all little children living at the west end of London, take delight in carrying out pieces of bread for the swans in Kensington Gardens. These swans are nearly always gentle to children, and will come waddling out of the water, and eat from the children's hands. I must say, however, if swans could know

how awkward they look when waddling about on dry land, they would never—at least, if they care for admiration—show themselves out of their proper element. They are as awkward and ungainly in all their movements when on land, as they are graceful in the water. I know few prettier sights than that of a swan moving lazily along in summer on some calm lake or river, his reflection just broken now and then by the tiny wavelets that he makes in swimming.

Swans build their nests on the bank of some river or piece of water, or still more frequently on some small island. In the nest the mother swan lays six or seven greenish-white eggs, on which she sits patiently for two months before the young cygnets appear. She nurses them with most tender care, teaching them to swim, and sometimes carrying them on her back when the water is rough, or the current strong.

I told you just now how gentle tame swans generally are, but I must add that they are not always so. They are anything but gentle if you go near their nests, or their young ones. When I was a little girl, and was staying at a country house, where there was a large lake, I had a very disagreeable adventure with a swan.

I had been feeding some swans in the morning with bread which I had brought from breakfast. My governess had taken me down to the lake, and we had found the beautiful creatures perfectly tame. In the afternoon, after my early dinner, I took some bread from the table, thinking I would run down and feed them again. I ran off alone, for they

had been so gentle in the morning it did not occur to me that there was any danger. Reaching the edge of the water, I found that my friends whom I had fed before had gone off to another part of the lake; but there was a solitary one not far away, sitting among some reeds upon the bank.

I approached it, and tried to make it come to me by calling, and by holding out the bread in my hand; but it took not the slightest notice. Then I threw some bread to it, when I saw its feathers rising as if it was growing angry. But I wanted to make it either come to me or go into the water, that I might see it swim; so at last I threw a piece of hard crust at it, calling out at the same time, "You stupid thing, get up." It did get up, and more quickly than I expected; for it ran at me as fast as it could waddle, hissing angrily, flapping its wings, and with all its feathers raised up. I was a tall child of eight years old, and could easily have escaped by running, but unluckily I stumbled and fell just as I turned to run away. The swan instantly seized my dress in its bill, while it beat me cruelly with its wings. My screams soon brought a gardener to the spot, who drove the swan away; but I was already dreadfully bruised. Then the gardener warned me solemnly never to go near a sitting swan again: I had disturbed the poor swan while she was sitting on her eggs.

The nest of the swan is made of a quantity of reeds, rushes, and grasses set upon the bank close to the water, in some quiet place. The bird will generally choose the shore

of some little island to build its nest in, if it can find one. There are several different kinds of swans. The one with which we are most familiar, and which I have been describing to you, is known as the Tame, or Mute Swan.

Then there is the Hooper, Elk Swan, or Whistling Swan, which has a very slender beak, black at the tip, and yellow at the base, and without the black tubercle. This bird is called the Hooper, because its cry resembles the word "hoop" called out in a loud tone. When flying, these birds take the form of a wedge, and cry loudly as they go.

There is another species of British Swan, called Bewick's Swan, which resembles the Hooper, but is smaller, and has a large patch of orange at the base of the beak. This is not a graceful bird, and, when sitting on the water, appears more like a goose than a swan. When flying, these birds go generally in a line.

There is also another species of swan, called the Polish, or Immutable, Swan. This is also sometimes found in England. It is called the Immutable from the fact that the young ones are white, like the older birds, as they do not pass through the grey state of plumage. This kind of swan has a decided orange colour covering the whole of the beak.

Then we have the Black Swan—I daresay you have often seen them, for they are quite common in England now. They were first found in Australia, and are wonderfully handsome birds, with scarlet bills; but their long necks have not got the graceful curve seen in the white swans.